THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • MONDAY • MAY 24, 2021 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 32 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianxpress
twitter.com/newindianxpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

B.1.617 VARIANT: EXPERTS URGE GOVT TO RETHINK VAX POLICY

The two major vaccines available in India may have less efficacy against the B.1.617 strain, say experts citing a recent UK study

PFIZER JAB OFFERS BETTER PROTECTION: STUDY

According to a recent study by Public Health England, the two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine offer just 60% efficacy, while the protection after a single dose is much lower. The jab, however, has 66% efficacy after two doses against the B.1.1.7 strain, first detected in the UK. The study showed the Pfizer vaccine was 88% effective against B1617 and 93% against B.1.1.7

'NEED FRESH MODELLING, SEROSURVEYS'

- According to virologist Gagandeep Kang, fresh modelling and serosurveys are urgently needed to optimise strategy for India
- It is better to reduce infection risk in a large number of people by offering one dose, rather than protecting a smaller group with the two-dose regimen, said virologist Sudhanshu Vrati | **P7**

GOVT

CLAIMS BOTH COVISHIELD AND COVAXIN PROTECT AGAINST MOST COVID STRAINS

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

INDIA ON SUNDAY EVENING BECAME THE THIRD NATION AFTER U.S. & BRAZIL TO CROSS 3 LAKH CUMULATIVE FATALITIES

As black fungus cases rise, state sees highest Covid-19 toll at 626

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN the background of the growing epidemic of mucormycosis (black fungus), Karnataka on Sunday reported its highest Covid fatalities at 626 in a single day.

With an increasing number of mucormycosis cases being reported from across the state, the worrisome scenario could be that of deaths spiking in the days to come, although these will not be labelled as "Covid deaths".

This latest dread is being looked upon as a separate disease, and Health Commissioner Dr Thrilok Chandra too confirmed that mucormycosis cases are being recorded separately and not as part of Covid-19, especially after the State Government recently declared it as an epidemic.

All the patients who are suffering from mucormycosis have developed the condition while being treated for Covid with steroids and administered oxygen without ensuring water hygiene. Over 15 patients have been reported dead by eight hospitals in Bengaluru alone so far, and on Sunday, Hubballi reported its first mucormycosis death, while ten additional such cases and one more death was reported from Udupi. Belagavi too reported two deaths, both septuagenarians.

Dr Pradeep Rangappa, senior consultant, Critical Care, Columbia Asia Referral Hospital, Yeshwanthpur, said, "We are seeing a lot of black fungus cases, but not too many deaths by it, even in other districts. Those who present early are getting treated. Once it spreads to the eyes, it is alarming as it can easily reach the brain, which could be fatal."

Dr Manoj Kumar, Dean-cum-Director, Bowring and Lady Curzon Medical College, which is the nodal centre for treating black fungus, said, "We have 10 dedicated beds to treat mucormycosis patients. However, the number of patients infected has increased and we currently have accommodated 32 of them. We cannot say if mucormycosis is causing many deaths. In the coming days, if cases go up, it will be difficult to handle them all."

Meanwhile, the record number of fatalities on Sunday took the Covid toll past the 25K-mark to 25,282. The mortality rate too increased from 1.02 per cent to 1.04 per cent. Bengaluru alone reported 362 deaths, taking its mortality rate to 1 per cent from Saturday's 0.97 per cent. P4

KARNATAKA	MAY 22	MAY 23
Fresh cases	31,183	25,979
Recoveries	61,766	35,573
Deaths	451	626

A policeman chases away people who were out during the statewide lockdown, put in place to curb the spread of Covid-19, at Chickpet Market in Bengaluru on Sunday | SHRIRAM BN

Vaccine a distant reality in rural India, shows app

Abysmally low rates of vaccination in rural districts across India

PRANAB MONDAL, HARPREET BAJWA, SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI & RAJESH ASNANI @ Kolkata/Chandigarh/Mumbai/Jaipur

"VACCINE *suna hai magar hum logo ko na mila. Kaise milega na jante hain* (I have heard about the vaccine but not got it. I don't know how to get it either)," said Raghunandan Paswan, 50, a daily wage labourer in Vaishali district of Bihar.

Paswan's lament sums up the progress of the vaccination in the rural areas. An analysis of data available on the CoWin app shows that vaccination in the rural belts of most states is lagging behind urban centres.

Given that the Covid-19 pandemic is now raging in the villages, it has set off alarm bells in health circles. It's a major concern, considering that medical facilities and awareness levels are below urban standards.

Take the case of West Bengal, where Covid cases are out of control following the recent elections. Till May 20, 30% of Kolkata and the adjoining urban pockets spread over four districts had been vaccinated. This is in sharp contrast to the 14 rural districts in the state, where seven districts have a vaccination percentage of less than 10.

In north Bengal's Jalpaiguri district, only 5.8% of the population had been vaccinated. This is followed by Birbhum with only 8.74%. Among the better performing rural districts is South Dinajpur, with 15.3%. No other rural district crosses 12%.

Even in these places, the gap is big between municipal centres and gram panchayats. Around 15,488 doses were administered in the Jhargram municipality area. In the rural Gopiballavpur block in the same district, with a population three times that of the pocket in Jhargram, the figure is 8,250 only.

The rural-urban divide is stark in Punjab also. CONTINUED ON: P8

WORRYING TREND

BIHAR
About 60% of urban Bihar vaccinated. Just 5% of rural population has got the shots. 76% of new cases and deaths reported from villages

MADHYA PRADESH
Vax in urban districts like Indore (27%), Bhopal (24%), Gwalior (24%). Rural districts like Agar Malwa (11%), Umaria (10%), Harda (11%), Alirajpur (8%)

MAHARASHTRA
Mumbai (43.11%), Pune (47.31%), Nagpur (48.55%), as against rural districts Gadchiroli (18.65%), Palghar (18.1%), Hingoli (17.17%)

PUNJAB
Bathinda (9.79%), Ferozpur (4.51%), Fatehgarh Sahib (9.63%), Muktsar Sahib (9.62%), Mansa (7.9%), Moga (9.56%), Sangrur (7.9%)

WEST BENGAL
30% of all doses administered in Kolkata and adjoining districts. In 14 rural districts, max vaccination in South Dinajpur (15.35%)

RAJASTHAN
Sawai Madhopur (19.9%), Dausa (16.36%), Pratapgarh (17.21%), Jalore (17.25%), Tonk (17.6%), Dungarpur (18%)

Moderna shoos off Punjab, sets trend for others

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

REFUSAL by Moderna, a US based Covid-19 vaccine maker, on Sunday to directly supply doses to the Punjab government came as a reminder that global bids by individual states to procure vaccines from the international market may not yield favorable results.

Experts said the international tenders floated by several state governments like UP, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Kerala, apart from Punjab, pit them against one another, besides sending a wrong message that the Covid response in the country is uncoordinated.

In a country already reeling under an acute shortage of vaccines, this development adds to the worries of the authorities as only around 14.4 crore people have received their first dose, while a meagre 4.14 crore have got the second one. The daily vaccination number, too, has come down to just 1-2 million a day, after peaking to over four million per day in early April.

The Punjab government, which had approached top vaccine makers, including Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, J&J and Sputnik V for direct supply, said Moderna got back claiming it would "only deal with Government of India". CONTINUED ON: P8

Patient's son attacks doc at Ballari hosp

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR @ Ballari

TENSION prevailed at VIMS Hospital in Ballari city on Sunday after a woman duty doctor was assaulted by the relative of a Covid patient. The police arrested the attacker soon after.

The attacker, Thippeswamy M (33), is seen arguing with the doctor, Dr Priyadarshini, inside the Covid ward and then assaulting her. The incident was caught on a CCTV camera inside the ward and the video went viral on social media sites. Netizens demanded strict and immediate action against the attacker and also requested better security for doctors fighting the pandemic. The Cowl Bazar Police, who registered a case, said the attacker's father, who was being treated for Covid-related issues for a week, died on Sunday morning. "His father, who was 65-years-old, was admitted to VIMS last week. On Sunday, his relatives blamed hospital authorities for his death and started arguing with the duty doctor. Though Dr Priyadarshini tried to explain to the relatives how the death occurred, the son attacked her," a police official said.

District Health Officer Dr H L Janardhan said, "People should control their emotions. All the doctors and frontline medical staff are working hard to fight the pandemic and such attacks bring down their morale. A case has been registered with the police. We request relatives to reach higher authorities at hospitals, instead of taking law into their hands." P3

A clip from CCTV footage at the VIMS Hospital shows the assault on the doctor.

LOCKDOWN EXTENDED IN DELHI, HARYANA, RAJASTHAN

Lockdown was extended on Sunday in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Puducherry till May-end or beyond. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the process of 'unlock' will start from May 31. Rajasthan extended the lockdown till June 8, while Haryana's lockdown will stay till May 31

NATIONWIDE	MAY 22	MAY 23
Fresh cases	2,57,299	2,40,842
Recoveries	3,57,630	3,55,102
Deaths	4,194	3,741 (Mom)

No honorarium for 3 months for ASHA workers, says HDK

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE State Government has not paid the honorarium to ASHA workers for the last three months and it should be released immediately, said senior JDS leader and former chief minister **H D Kumaraswamy** on Sunday.

Last year, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa had announced an incentive of ₹3,000 to ASHA workers as part of the Covid financial aid package during the first wave.

Kumaraswamy's appeal came after an ASHA worker stopped Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers D V Sadananda Gowda on Sunday, and pleaded with him to get the pending amount released. The ASHA worker told the minister that without the money, they are finding it tough to run their families. "Hardly 50 per cent of ASHA workers have received the honorarium. So far, 16 workers have lost their lives battling Covid, but the government has paid a compensation of ₹50 lakh to only one, while forgetting others," he said.

Accusing the government of endangering the lives of health workers, he asked, "How can one trust the government on its ₹1,250-crore package when it has failed to pay the pending amounts to ASHA workers?"

ABUSIVE CHHATTISGARH COLLECTOR SHUNTED OUT

EJAZ KAISER @ Raipur

FOLLOWING widespread outrage on social media over Surajpur collector Ranbir Sharma slapping a youth and smashing his mobile phone for allegedly flouting lockdown norms, the Chhattisgarh governemnt on Sunday transferred the IAS officer to the state secretariat. "I am upset with this incident. I apologise to the young man and his family," said Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who also issued directions to compensate the youth with a new mobile handset. Sharma, too, apologised for slapping the youth, identified as Aman Mittal. "I am satisfied with the government action. Today I received a new mobile phone from the collector," said Mittal.

Video grab of Ranbir Sharma slapping a youth

Most states favour conducting Class 12 board exams, final decision on June 1

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

A high-level meeting on Sunday discussed whether to conduct Class 12 board exams at designated centres for 19 major subjects or hold shorter exams at schools, but no decision was taken due to a lack of consensus. The meeting was chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by Union Ministers Ramesh Pokhriyal, Prakash Javadekar, Smriti Irani and Sanjay Dhotre, besides education ministers and secretaries of several states.

According to sources, the CBSE has proposed that exams be held between July 15 and August 26 and the result declared in September.

Most states left it for the Centre to take the call, but Maharashtra said the examinations should be cancelled altogether, while Delhi and Kerala suggested that all students must be vaccinated before the tests.

"Following a detailed discussion with states, it was decided that more deliberation will be carried out," said an official. The states were asked to send their suggestions by Tuesday.

Meanwhile, sources said neither the CBSE nor the government is in favour of cancelling the examinations.

"The option of holding CBSE board exams in 19 major subjects found support from many states," an official said. A decision is likely by June 1.

2ND PU EXAMS MUST BE HELD: SURESH

Minister for Primary and Secondary Education S Suresh Kumar, during his meeting with Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank on Saturday, supported the idea of holding Second PU and CBSE Class 12 examinations |

EXPRESS READ

Olympian Sushil Kumar in 6-day police custody

New Delhi: A Delhi court sent Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar to six days' police custody on Sunday for interrogation in connection with the killing of a fellow wrestler. Kumar and his associates allegedly assaulted wrestler Sagar Dhankar (23), and two of his friends, at the Chhatrasal stadium, on the intervening night of May 4 and 5 | **P8**

WITH THIS ISSUE THE ESSENTIAL CAMPUS DIGEST edex YOUR LIFE COACH
28 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF EDEX (TABLOID), 4 OF CITY EXPRESS

HEALING HAND

Bureaucrats, police officers who double as doctors

RAJESH ASNANI, RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR & ANURAAG SINGH @ Jaipur/Patna/Bhopal

THEY are qualified doctors by training, but bureaucrats or police officers by profession. They had donned the white coat of medical practitioners before clearing the civil service examinations and becoming IAS or IPS officers.

Now in this hour of crisis caused by the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, besides doing their jobs as a chief executive or a district magistrate, they take out time to visit hospitals and double up as doctors to treat Covid patients.

Meet Manju Sheoran Jakhar, S M Thiyagrajan and Anil Kumar among others, the first two being IAS officers of the Rajasthan and Bihar cadre respectively, and the third an IPS officer in UP. All three had studied MBBS. They are now putting their medical training to good use, playing a double role with ease.

Manju Sheoran Jakhar

S M Thiyagrajan

Jakhar, a 2016 batch IAS officer, is the chief executive officer of the Udaipur District Council and oversees rural development work under the MNREGA. She studied MBBS at the Lady Hardinge Medical College in New Delhi and also completed her MS in gynaecology before cracking the civil services exam.

Given her medical background, she was assigned the work of ensuring oxygen supply to patients and to fill the gap in Covid testing facilities. During her almost daily rounds of hospitals to ensure this, she takes out time to see patients in the wards of the RNT Medical College Hospital in Udaipur, among others.

Jakhar also gives phone consultation to patients. "A lot of treatment is done on the phone itself as every family has someone or other suffering from Covid. I check their reports, symptoms and track their treatment. This will continue as I am doctor," she said. To manage medical oxygen, her team collected data from hospitals requiring oxygen and then rationed it. CONTINUED ON: P7

ALMANAC TODAY
• **Monday:** 24/05/2021 • **Year:** Plava • **Ayana:** Uttharayana
• **Ritu:** Vasantha • **Masa:** Vaishala • **Paksha:** Shukla • **Tithi:** Thrayodashi 10.03 pm
• **Nakshatra:** Chitthaa 7.23 am • Moon in Simha Rashi • **Rahukaala:** 07:30 am to 09:00 am
• **Gulikakala:** 01:30 pm to 03:00 pm • **Yamaganda:** 10:30 am to 12:00 pm

WEATHER
MIN 21°C | MAX 31°C
FORECAST
Rain showers. Increasing cloudiness

Sunrise 5.52 am
Sunset 6.40 pm
Moonrise 4.36 pm
Moonset 3.51 am

Suresh Kumar backs holding Class 12 exams

Says students can attempt again later if they miss out due to Covid-related reasons

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

MINISTER for Primary and Secondary Education S Suresh Kumar, during his meeting with Union HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank on Sunday, backed the idea of holding the second PU and CBSE Class 12 examination, saying it will benefit the students.

He was part of the meeting the Union HRD minister held with education ministers of all states to elicit their opinion on holding the exams. It is said that most ministers wanted the exams to be held.

Suresh Kumar said it is imperative to hold Class 12 examinations, through any mode, to prepare students for professional courses. When the Covid situation improves, exams can be held through a simplified process. The meeting decided to inform students at least 15-20 days before the exams.

He said that the government has decided to give another chance to students to write the exams at a later date if they miss them due to Covid-related reasons. Many suggestions were given at the meeting to simplify the exam process and, the minister said that if this model is followed, the exams will be completed within 45 days.

Suresh Kumar, in a note, said that PU exams can be organised efficiently as the State has learnt from holding SSLC exams last year. A decision will be taken soon based on the learning of students, mentality of parents, Central Government suggestions and a comprehensive overview of preparations for the exams.

He said that the question papers have already been prepared. The number of examination centres will be increased to hold safe exams with enough distancing between students. If the exams are held in July, results can be declared by August, and NEET, JEE, CET, ICAR and other competitive examinations can be held in August, he recommended to the Union minister.

Police personnel garland motorists for violating lockdown restrictions in Madanayakanahalli on Sunday

Police say it with garlands: Shame on you!

Bengaluru : Madanayakanahalli police on Sunday seized several vehicles and 'honoured' bike riders by garlanding them. The police stopped the vehicles at Navayuga toll gate and most of them were found to be out without a reason. A senior police officer said more than 30 vehicles, including bikes and auto rickshaws, were seized and the staff began checking vehicles around 10.30 am. "We did allow some of the people who were going out of the city for medical emergencies," he added. Speaking to TNIE, Manjunath BS, inspector of Madanayakanahalli police station said, "Our staff had bought 25 garlands to honour those violating lockdown norms. It was a special way to warn them before seizing their vehicles," he added. **ENS**

Advocate, rly cops rescue sick woman abandoned by kin

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN a heart-wrenching incident, a woman suspected to be Covid-positive, was found abandoned by her family at KSR Railway Station in Bengaluru. After a three-day ordeal, during which she lay alone and helpless, the woman was rescued by Railway Police on Saturday evening. All thanks to an advocate who raised an alarm.

The woman, in her thirties, had been abandoned near the rear entrance of the station, said an official release. She was later admitted to KC General Hospital by Railway Police.

Advocate M Sridharan, who regularly passed by the rear entrance of the station, saw her lying near the ticket booking office for three days. "I take this route to pick up my sister, who works as a doctor at the Railway Hospital, around 5 pm every day. I saw a person lying in pouring rain for two days, and surrounded by flies on another day. It really upset me. Though there were auto drivers around, no one seemed to want to help. I was worried about going near her but wanted to help," he told TNIE.

Sridharan found the Divisional Railway Manager's number online as well as a contact number of the Railway Protection Force (RPF). "I messaged them on Saturday and got an instant response, and a person was rushed to the spot immediately," he said.

Assistant Sub Inspector, RPF, Shankarappa, who went to the spot, said, "She was very weak and couldn't stand. We gave her water and she drank some, but couldn't eat anything. She uttered a few words in Hindi. Our doctor attended to her until the ambulance arrived, and said her pulse was weak and she had low sugar levels."

"We are really thankful to the person who alerted us about it, and began treatment immediately," DRM A K Verma said.

The woman being shifted to the KC General Hospital on Saturday evening

FRONTLINE WORKER TAG COMES AS A RELIEF FOR POSTAL STAFFERS

S LALITHA @Bengaluru

WITH 40 postal staffers losing their lives in the second wave of the pandemic till date and 610 still Covid active, running the show for the last two months has been a tough balancing act for the Karnataka Postal Department. So, the declaration of postal employees as frontline workers has come as a huge morale booster for them as they can now get priority in vaccination.

Of the 40 deaths, 23 were village postmasters and postmen/women (grameen dak sevaks), reveal data released by the Karnataka Postal Circle. Three drivers, three stenographers, five accountants and six regular postmen have also lost their lives.

"Due to persistent efforts undertaken by us with the CM's Secretariat, postal staff have been declared as frontline workers. A total of 11,560 employees in the 18-45 age group and 19,647 in the 45-plus group will now be vaccinated," Chief Postmaster General (Karnataka Circle) Sharda Sampath told *TNIE*.

The department has already organised 53 vaccination camps where 5,477 employees have been vaccinated. Also, family member of 13 employees, who died of Covid, have been given jobs in the department on compassionate grounds, said Sampath.

The Karnataka Circle has also developed an app called 'Covi Suraksha' that updates the details of the first and second doses of all those who have been vaccinated, she said. "A blood plasma bank, too, has been put in place for the staffers."

The department witnessed 767 positive cases and 117 patients have recovered.

Sonu Sood encourages students to come together to change the world

Bengaluru: "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples," said actor Sonu Sood, whose philanthropy during the Covid crisis earned him bouquets from across the country, quoting Mother Theresa. The Bollywood actor was speaking at the graduation ceremony for 73 students of the Canadian International School (CIS) in Bengaluru on Sunday. Encouraging the young graduates to come together to change the world, Sood said, "I remember when I started my journey of helping people, I never knew that I could achieve so much and get connected with millions of people across the globe." "I just kept moving because I believed in myself. So, it's very important to plan your moves and believe in yourself. Patience and perseverance are very, very important in your life," he said. **ENS**

Students set up 'Hello Doctor' helpline for Covid-19 response

PEARL MARIA D'SOUZA
@ Bengaluru

EVEN as college students are waiting for their examinations and the coming academic year to begin, they are keeping busy by filling the gaps in Covid-19 response, wherever needed. The State Committee of the student organisation AIDSO has started 'Hello Doctor', a free tele-clinic for those having Covid-19 symptoms, from May 22.

The organsiation has roped in 35-40 doctors who will work pro bono. About 10 student volunteers across the state are spreading the word about the tele-consultation, Vinay Chandra, AIDSO State Secretariat Member and Bangalore District Treasurer told TNIE.

Guidance from experts for home isolation and primary treatment for Covid-19, along with counselling for those in distress, is available through the tele-consultation. To begin with, two sessions of one hour each will be held from Monday to Saturday (9-10 am and 4-5 pm), and three sessions (10-11 am; 12 pm-1 pm; 5-6 pm) will be held on Sundays, said Vinay. Contact for appointment: 9164220387, 9035762866, 8951824630, 9538627750, 8880744437, 9632127094.

Meanwhile, Bangalore Student Community, a forum of more than 4,000 students has split itself into various teams, each dedicated to helping out those in need. They also have an on-ground team with 100 members. The team can be reached on social media handles or 7760161751.

With black fungus cases rising, the team is tying up with medical students for health checkups, said Dhruv Jatti, president, Bangalore Student Community, adding that the team is exploring a tech intervention for the registration of vaccination.

Daily Starscope

PETER VIDAL

24th May: If you ever wonder what life on earth has got to do with the stars, then think about this: the origin of every atom, through and piece of energy in your body lies in the Big Bang which physicists believe began our universe. Everything in the world is therefore interconnected, and that really does mean everything! Including people and planets!

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)
There could be an air of expectation all week, largely due to your lunar alignments. This generates a sense that while life is good, you never know what is around the next corner. Quite right, too. And that's why you must be on your guard. You're also in quite an inventive frame of mind, by the way, so look for imaginative solutions to old problems.

TAURUS (Apr. 21 - May 21)
The Moon's position has to be watched for most daily ups and downs, and today's pattern is are curious ones. It's as if the mood of the times suits you but the circumstances might not. So, if you feel slightly short-changed, it could be because you're not making the most of a mixed day. You can always just pause for breath and wait till you catch up with yourself.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)
There's an increasing sense of tension, perhaps passion. But are you comfortable with this? I suspect not. Not that is, unless you devote yourself to worthy causes and selfless duties. The down side is that you could expose yourself to exploitation so, rather than become a doormat, why not pick and choose the people you're prepared to help?

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)
You're such a sensitive soul that it's always pleasant when you think that you're getting the support you feel you need. Which means that people you love are on your side for a change - which is not always the way that it seems! You're still keeping some of your plans to yourself - and why not?

LEO (July 24 - Aug. 23)
You may be in a strange state, quite happy to say what you think on the one hand, but not to reveal your true feelings on the other. Perhaps you're right. Perhaps you're not confident enough in your emotions to be able to talk about them yet. And, if that's the case, all you can do is wait until the time and place - and the people - are right.

VIRGO (Aug. 24 - Sept. 23)
There is a great deal to be said for standing your ground. But, I'm not sure if it's enough. There's an old eastern proverb that the branch which bends in the wind stays on the tree. That's a way of saying that, in a week of change, complete flexibility is probably your best option.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)
The surface may be calm, but in the astrological universe there's a great deal bubbling underneath - and it's all about to burst through. In straight, practical terms, your energy is soon to increase, but you'll also be growing more impatient and eager to push your plans into effect - at any cost.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
If we look over the next week, then it seems that the changes you experience will be indirect, by which I mean that they could come via other people, or in ways you didn't expect. In either case, the next month could be a time of mystery. The truth could lie in your intuition and imagination - tempered with real facts, of course.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 - Dec. 22)
There's a time to move - and a time to stand still. And this, I'd say, is a time to stand still. As is tomorrow and the day after. Yet by the end of the week you'll be moving fast. That is the planetary prognosis. Now all you have to do is arrange your daily diary to fit in with the celestial formations.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 23 - Jan. 20)
Partners are in a generally supportive frame of mind. But then that's only as much as you'd expect. But it is a situation you can encourage by praising, boosting, flattering and help-ing them. In other words, don't wait for them to come to you; it's you who has to make the first move. Looking ahead, your professional stars are about to expose new, untested ambitions.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 - Feb. 19)
You could be taking on fresh responsibilities, mainly emotional ones. Even at work a new task could have a sense of personal, almost parental, commitment about it. There's also a vague spot of financial confusion around, but you'll be tempted to give money to worthwhile causes - and that can only do you good.

PISCES (Feb. 20 - Mar 20)
The heavens are in a creative state. What I really mean by this is that you are in a position to develop and express your unique gifts, whatever they are. Much of your energy will be directed towards personal engagements, romantic connections and relationships with younger people and youthful family members.

THE PHANTOM

CHIEF, WHAT DO YOU THINK? TOWNS ELLERBEE.... IS HE? JOHN X?
WOULD A MAN BE RIGHT TO.... KNOW ONE THING TO BE TRUE AND....
A TRUSTED MAN...? YES, HE WOULD BE.
SUCH A MAN ALWAYS SEES THE RIGHT.
ALL I SAW WAS THE BACK OF THE MAN'S HEAD ON OUR ESCAPE TO BANGALA.
AND SAW ANOTHER?
IS IRU, I MIGHT

HI AND LOIS

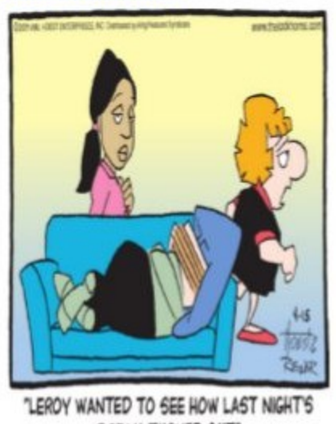
BEETLE BAILEY

SARGE, IF YOU GIVE ME A PASS TO TOWN, I'LL GIVE YOU THE RIGHTS TO MY WATERMELON SLICE
RIGHTS?! YOU SOUND LIKE A LAWYER
NO, IF I WAS A LAWYER, I'D SAY...
"I HEREBY GRANT AND CONVEY TO YOU ALL INTEREST, CLAIMS AND TITLES TO SAID MELON, TOGETHER WITH ALL RINDS, SEEDS AND JUICE, WITH ALL RIGHTS TO CUT, BITE AND CONSUME IT, REJECTING ANY CLAIMS TO SAID ITEM NOTWITHSTANDING...
HERE, I SURRENDER

BLONDIE

I RAN INTO ONE OF OUR OLD NEIGHBORS TODAY AND SHE ASKED ABOUT YOU, DEAR
THAT'S NICE! WHAT DID YOU TELL HER?
THAT YOUR NAME IS DAGWOOD
SHE THOUGHT IT WAS DURWOOD

LOCKHORNS



"LEROY WANTED TO SEE HOW LAST NIGHT'S DREAM TURNED OUT."

DENNIS THE MENACE

"OL' MARGARET CAN'T KEEP A SECRET... EVEN IF SHE DOESN'T HAVE ONE."

SU DO KU

Hard: Test your number crunching skills with our unique puzzle

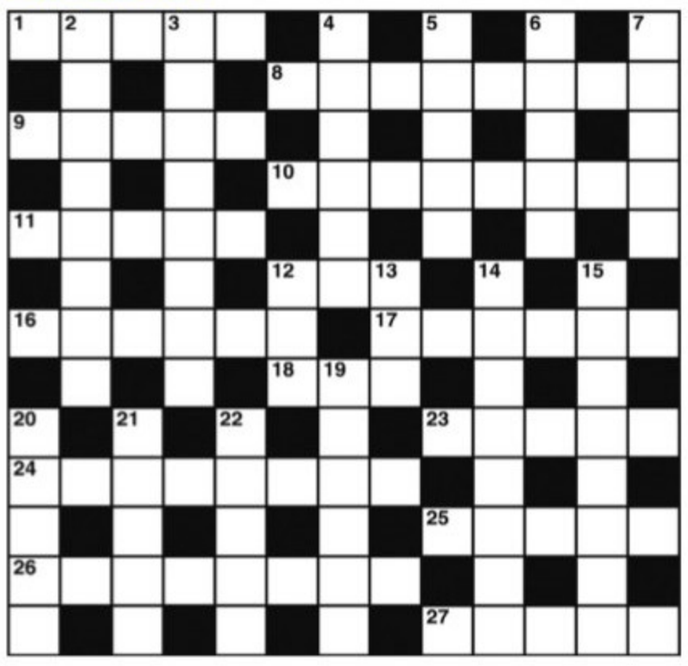
Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3X3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

8				3	1	6		
		6	2		9			5
							7	1
		3			5		6	
				4				
	7		8			1		
4	5							
1			9		6	5		
		8	3	5				2

Solutions to Saturday's puzzle

5	9	4	6	2	3	8	7	1
7	3	1	8	9	4	5	6	2
2	6	8	7	5	1	9	3	4
1	7	2	9	3	6	4	8	5
8	5	9	1	4	7	3	2	6
6	4	3	5	8	2	1	9	7
4	1	7	3	6	8	2	5	9
9	8	6	2	1	5	7	4	3
3	2	5	4	7	9	6	1	8

CROSS WORD



ACROSS
1 Internally it's such a noisy capital city (5)
8 VIP unidentified? (8)
9 A moment of informality (5)
10 Small company is safe from such failures (8)
11 Heavenly food (5)
12 An attempt to indicate time past (3)
16 Saw only to become a prisoner (6)
17 Hand-operated computer (6)
18 Going bad? (3)
23 Not smiling back (5)
24 Forget how to take charge (8)
25 Refuse holder a turn in the game (5)
26 Skill shown when skill is added to effort (8)
27 A fish to go on ice (5)

DOWN
2 I get married and set out full of spirit (8)
3 A codebreaker about to close a bid? (8)
4 What is wrong in a record being beaten? (6)
5 Divine meaning (5)
6 They reel up and down in play (2-3)
7 He has no settled occupation (5)
12 Fuss caused by commercial ring (3)
13 Lout of a sort (3)
14 A production of rabbits - perhaps three out in a row (3,5)
15 Completely wrong direction (8)
19 Knocks down several storeys? (6)
20 The whole lot at variance (5)
21 Possibly hated the end of one's life (5)
22 The end is nigh (5)

SATURDAY'S SOLUTIONS

Across: 1 Great Lakes, 6 Thus, 10 Nears, 11 Hair tonic, 12 Sanskrit, 13 Rouen, 15 Pleased, 17 Rhubarb, 19 Rankles, 21 Canters, 22 Newer, 24 Armenian, 27 Israelite, 28 Tudor, 29 Echo, 30 Undeterred.
Down: 1 Gone, 2 El Alamein, 3 Tests, 4 Adhered, 5 Evictor, 7 Hindu, 8 Second-best, 9 Star turn, 14 Apprentice, 16 Salaries, 18 Alexander, 20 Seallion, 21 Compere, 23 Worth, 25 Nitre, 26 Prod.

JUMBLE

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

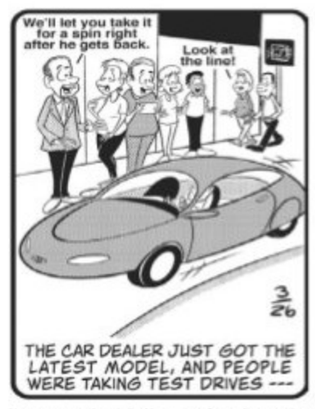
AGDOM

IVROS

ANOSES

SENVTI

©2020 Tribune Content Agency, LLC. All Rights Reserved.


We'll let you take it for a spin right after he gets back.
Look at the line!
THE CAR DEALER JUST GOT THE LATEST MODEL, AND PEOPLE WERE TAKING TEST DRIVES ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon

Print your answer here:

ANSWERS TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S: **Jumbles:** CRYPT SHIFT URCHIN GOTTEN
ANSWER: The company's executives with offices on the top floor were—HIGHER-UPS

The ninth Oxygen Express for Karnataka arrived at Inland Container Depot, Whitefield with 120 tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen from Tatanagar in Jharkhand. With this consignment, the state has now got 1062.14 tonnes of LMO totally from Odisha, Jharkahand and Gujarat

FRESH TROUBLE

Murmurs of leadership change grow loud again

As B S Yediyurappa inches towards completing two years, ministers wait for signal; No change, say party insiders

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

DESPITE the Covid pandemic havoc in Karnataka, as B S Yediyurappa inches close to completing two years as Chief Minister, murmurs of a leadership change in the State have once again resurfaced.

With in-fighting within the cabinet and disgruntlement among party leaders over the increasingly widening gap between the government and party, various leaders and factions have started lobbying with the central leadership over possible picks for the next chief ministerial candidate, if the high command decides it is time for a shift in power dynamics.

While aspirants and their teams, right from Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi, Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi to ministers Basavaraj Bommai and Murugesh Nirani, are said to be waiting for the high command to decide that the time for change is right, sources in the party suggest that a change in leadership is unlikely, at least till the pandemic eases.

Names of MLAs like Arvind Bellad are also in the running, given his multiple attempts to reach out to central leaders in Delhi.

While the government struggles to grapple with Covid-19, the BJP in Karnataka is fighting its own battle of keeping the party cadre and leaders in tune. Sources suggest that while animosity and cold wars between ministers in the cabinet, especially those in charge of managing Covid, are growing, on the party front the central leadership is not convinced that any candidate is good enough right now to replace Yediyurappa without a backlash.

Sources in the party suggest that despite in-fighting, complaints, arm-twisting against Yediyurappa, no change is in sight at least until the pandemic settles down. The central leadership of the party is said to have been convinced that Yediyurappa is their best bet to keep the government together when ministers are not mincing words to attack each other at closed doors meetings over funds, resources, shortages and Covid-19 management.

"Yediyurappa's age and allegations of corruption and interference against his son Vijayendra have been the go-to cards for his baiters, but nobody has offered a suitable replacement if things were to turn ugly. The Central leadership is not keen to antagonise Yediyurappa," a source said.

Sand policy to be implemented strictly, order in next fortnight, says Nirani

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

STATING that a government order on implementing the sand policy will be passed in the next 15 days, Mines and Geology Minister Murugesh Nirani said that once the policy is implemented, it will help the public construct houses at an economical price.

Nirani told reporters, after chairing a review meeting of the department in the city on Sunday, that the new policy aims to curb the sand mafia. "We will implement the new sand policy with tough measures. However, cases will not be filed against farmers and locals who transport sand in bullock carts, and instructions have been given to mines and geology department officials and police not to harass them," he said.

He also revealed that the department has dedicated 30 per cent of its revenue for Covid-19 management. "The department has over Rs 1,600 crore right now, and we have dedicated over 30 per cent of this fund exclusively to manage the pandemic situation in the state," he said.

Commenting on the activities of his department, he said Mysuru has fewer number of mines, compared to neighbouring Mandya and Chamarajanagar districts.

Mines and Geology Minister Murugesh Nirani holds a review meeting of the department in Mysuru on Sunday | UDAYSHANKAR S

> We will implement the new sand policy with tough measures. Cases will not be filed against farmers and locals who transport sand in bullock carts, and instructions have been given to officials and police not to harass them
>
> Murugesh Nirani, Mines and Geology Minister

"A global tender will soon be called for carrying out a survey on quantity and quality of mineral deposits in these districts. We have been told that there are granite, graphite and nickel deposits in Mysuru region, and a survey will help explore them," he said.

Oxygen units in all taluks

Anticipating problems in tackling the pandemic in future, Nirani said the government was considering setting up oxygen generator units in all taluks. He said this will help overcome the crisis the state is witnessing today.

Reiterating his earlier position on oxygen supply, he denied that there is shortage of the life-saving gas in the state. "There is no shortage of oxygen, sufficient quantity is being produced in the state and we are also receiving oxygen from the Centre. But we are facing a shortage of cylinders to store oxygen," the minister said.

No change in leadership

Ruling out a change in leadership in Karnataka, Nirani said Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa will complete his remaining two-year term.

"There is no question of leadership change in the state, and CM Yediyurappa will complete his term. He has been handling the Covid pandemic effectively, and talk of leadership change is just rumours. We will face the next election under his leadership," he said.

Having learnt about Mysuru Zoo facing a financial crunch due to the lockdown, Nirani, who was in the city, adopted a tiger in the name of his grandson, Samarth Vijay. He later completed the formalities of adopting the animal and called upon others to come forward and adopt animals.

NO DRUGS TO TREAT BLACK FUNGUS CASES, PEOPLE DYING: OPPN

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

THE Opposition on Sunday took up the issue of shortage of medicines to treat mucormycosis or the black fungus infection, which is afflicting patients recovering from Covid-19.

Opposition leaders are claiming that a number of people are dying in their constituencies, and the government has failed to respond to this new health crisis. The government has thrown up its hands, saying there are no medicine stocks, and the injections will reach hospitals only in about 10 days.

While two people have died of black fungus in Tumakuru district, one death each was reported in Udupi and Hubballi. "Congress worker IG Ramesh and Ramachandra died in my constituency because they didn't get medicines in time. Four other patients are serious, and the government is saying there are no medicines available, '' said Kunigal MLA Dr D Ranganath.

Several districts have reported a large number of cases, and local legislators, especially from the opposition, are expressing anger that the government is declaring that medicines will arrive only in about 10 days.

Opposition leader Siddaramaiah said, "The government has shown indifference and not acted effectively against black fungus. Last week, I wrote to the government to be prepared with medicines and facilities, but it has done little."

JDS leader and former CM HD Kumaraswamy said, "Over the past three days, I've had reports of about 10 deaths due to mucormycosis from different parts of the state. There is a severe shortage of medicines and I spoke to the principal health secretary too. The government is saying it has informed the Union government and is waiting for them to send medicines, but it could take about 10 days. Many will succumb to the infection by then. I warned them three days ago but they have done nothing. Some states have sought to directly import the medicines as an emergency. We too should respond quickly."

The facilities at Bowring Hospital and Victoria Hospital are full, he said. "Each injection costs about Rs 7,500. How will the poor afford it? The government has given 15,000 injections to Gujarat, but only 1,050 injections to Karnataka. There have been deaths in Ramanagara, Bagalkot and Bidar too," he added.

KPCC president D K Shivakumar said there is an acute shortage of medicines to treat this infection. He said one of his family members is in hospital due to it, and the authorities are desperately asking for medicines. The govt should procure medicines on emergency basis, he added. According to Congress working president Eshwar Khandre, government-designated hospital beds are full in Kalaburagi. Patients in Bidar need to go to Kalaburagi, but there are no beds there. There is also a severe shortage of medicines. Of 15 cases in Bidar, some have gone to Telangana and some to Maharashtra for treatment, he said.

JUDICIARY BRACES ITSELF

'16 judicial staff, 190 lawyers died due to Covid in 48 days'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

EXPRESSING that the judiciary is facing an unprecedented challenge from the second wave of Covid-19, Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court Abhay Shreeniwas Oka said that unfortunately, 16 staffers of the judiciary and 190 advocates have succumbed to the infection in 48 days across the state.

Speaking on the topic 'Challenges before the Legal Fraternity in Covid Times' at the Third Webinar Series organised by the Advocates' Association of Bangalore (AAB) on Sunday, the Chief Justice said, "I feel there is a war-like situation on at the moment. Members of the judiciary must act like soldiers and adopt their strategies to combat Covid-19. I have told this to judicial officers and staff. Members of the Bar should also fight like they would on the battlefield. We have succeeded in the first wave, and we will be successful in the second wave too."

> I feel there is a war-like situation on at the moment. Members of the judiciary must act like soldiers and adopt their strategies to combat Covid-19. I have told this to judicial officers and staff. Members of the Bar should also fight like they would on the battlefield
>
> Abhay Shreeniwas Oka, Chief Justice, Karnataka HC

Mentioning that the impact of the first wave was less compared to the second wave, he informed that from April 1 to May 18, 2021, 616 staffers of the judiciary tested positive, of whom 16 succumbed to Covid-19. "It is disheartening to know that 190 advocates across the state have lost their lives to the pandemic. As many as 90 judicial officers tested positive during this period, but fortunately, all of them have recovered," he said.

Comparing the data of the number of Covid-infected persons and active cases reported in the state, especially in Bengaluru, during the second wave, with that of the first wave, Chief Justice Oka reiterated that the second wave hit the judiciary hard, and stressed that it also affected litigants.

Accordingly, he stated that he has directed principal judges in districts and seniormost judges in taluks to hold regular meetings with Nodal Officers appointed by the government, following the initiative taken by the judiciary, to ensure availability of beds, oxygen and medicines to judicial officers, staff and advocates. "We are here 24/7 for members of the Bar," he added.

Meanwhile, lauding the initiatives taken by Chief Justice Oka to ensure smooth and safe functioning of courts during the pandemic, former Advocate General and Senior Advocate Uday Holla called upon advocates who are in a better position, to take care of their younger colleagues of the Bar who are in financial distress.

IMA condemns attack on doctor in Ballari

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE Indian Medical Association condemned the attack on Dr Priyadarshini at VIMS Hospital in Ballari. Dr Srinivasa S, Chairman, National IMA Standing Committee for Child Health, said that if such incidents continue, young doctors will lose courage to treat sick patients. "The government should immediately intervene and take suitable action, otherwise IMA will fight for justice," he said.

Meanwhile, five such incidents of relatives flying into a rage against medical officers have occurred at VIMS over the last one week alone.

HELPLINE
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
For subscriptions & Supply related complaints
Call / WhatsApp
9886143555
7 AM - 4 PM MONDAY to SATURDAY

QuoteExpress
KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE STARS, AND YOUR FEET ON THE GROUND
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

QuoteExpress
IT ALWAYS SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL IT'S DONE
NELSON MANDELA

aavin
THE TAMILNADU CO-OP MILK PRODUCERS' FEDERATION LTD.,
JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR'S OFFICE, AMBATTUR, CHENNAI-98.
Tel. Ph. Nos. : 23464528, 29,30,31,32, 33 Fax No.: 044-23464536.
A Two Part Open Tender is invited for the following items

Sl.No.	Ref. No	Description	Estimated Value (Rs.in Lakhs)	Important Dates: Sale of Document	Pre-Bid Meeting	Submission of Tender Document along with sample	Opening of Technical Bids
1	993/JMDO/ Engg/2021	Supply, installation and commissioning of 1 No. of passenger Lift (10 persons) to JMD's Office	18.50	from 11.00 A.M to 4.00 P.M on all working days	02.06.2021 by 11.00 A.M.	25.06.2021 by 3.00 P.M.	25.06.2021 by 3.30 P.M.
2	4764/JMDO/ Engg/2020	Purchase, erection and commissioning of 36 Nos. of CCTV Cameras with accessories, 1 No. of Baggage Scanner & 10 Nos. of Focus Lights to Dairy cum Powder Plant, Ammapalayam, Thiruvannamalai	14.00				
3	500/K3/2021	Purchase of 1,20,000 Nos. ± 25% of HDPE Crates for two years requirement to Metro Dairies	301.20		09.06.2021 by 3.00 P.M.	28.06.2021 by 3.00 P.M.	28.06.2021 by 3.30 P.M.
4	3738/K1/ 2020	Purchase of Various types of Cups for one year requirement to products Dairy	43.82				

The Cost of each Tender document is Rs.1,000/- + GST 12% extra and if it is required through post Rs.100/- will be charged extra. For pre-qualification criteria, specifications, EMD payable, place of tender opening, etc., please refer the website www.tenders.tn.gov.in and www.aavinmilk.com. Tender documents can also be downloaded at free of cost, e-tendering may be submitted through the Website www.tntenders.gov.in.
DIPR/1606/TENDER/2021
JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed of the lispendence and not to enter into any arrangement/ agreement/ contract with any of the parties who claim to be the absolute owners of the schedule property, as the same is subject matter of pending litigation in Hon'ble City Civil Court Bangalore.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
Sy No 5/1, Beretana Agrahara Village and presently bearing BBMP Khata No 5/1/348, Singasandra Ward, Bangalore. Total area of land 83,746 sq ft.
Sd/-
G.R. Prakash, Advocate,
No 53, V.V Road, Basavanagudi, Bangalore 560 004.
Mobile:9845995953
e-mail:guraprakash@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client purchase the schedule property which is morefully described in the schedule hereunder from M. Rajendra S/o P. Munivenkatappa, No. 117, 4th Main, BTM Layout, 2nd Stage, N.S. Palya, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore-560076 and the property owner executed Sale Agreement to my client dated 10-11-2012 and my client suit filed the Smt. Divya Devi and others the case is pending over the schedule property in O.S. No. 7210/2015 (CCH-6) in the City Civil and Session Court at Bangalore, therefore any person/ persons should not purchase the schedule property.
SCHEDULE
All that piece and parcel of property bearing Sy. No. 17/1, 18, 19, 20, 26 and 94 situated at Hennur Village, Kasaba Hobli, Bangalore, measuring to an extent of 26 Acres 12 Guntas bounded on East by: land belongs to Missionaries, West by: Sarkari Kaluve and Portion of Survey No. 94 and Private Lands, North by: Sarkari Kaluve and Private lands, South by: Temple land and Sy. No. 17/2 belongs to Captain.
K.S. NARAYANASWAMY, Advocate
No. 317, 3rd Floor, Kurubarasanga Building, Gandhinagar, Bangalore-560009.
Mobile No. 9341346470

Education. Goals. And game changing decisions.
edex
Every Monday with THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
EXPRESS TRIBUTE
Pay Homage to the departed souls in The New Indian Express at very special rates
BENGALURU EDITION (Every Day)
BLACK & WHITE ₹100/- per square centimeter
COLOUR ₹125/- per square centimeter
ALL KARNATAKA EDITIONS (Every Day)
BLACK & WHITE ₹150/- per square centimeter
COLOUR ₹200/- per square centimeter
This section is open every day to place In-memoriam, remembrance, anniversary advertisements of your dearest and nearest ones.
For booking contact:
Ravi Kumar Mobile: 98865 50650, Office: 080 - 2286 6893

Government of India
Department of Atomic Energy
Bhabha Atomic Research Centre
Civil Engineering Section
Post Bag no.1.Yelwal, Mysore - 571130
Telephone : 0821-6724/6418 Fax : 0821-240 3064
NOTICE INVITING e- TENDER
Chief Engineer, BARC, Mysuru invites for & on behalf of the President of India, sealed item rate tenders from experienced contractors with sound financial & technical capacity for following work(s).

Tender Reference No.	BARC/MYS/CES/24/2020-21
Name of work	Formation of inner Patrolling Road along the Compound wall at BARC Plant site, Mysuru.
Estimated Cost	₹ 1,10,00,000/- (Rupees One Crore Ten Lakhs Only)
Period of Completion	06 (Six) months
Earnest Money Deposit	NIL
Sale of Tender Documents	From 25.05.2021 (11:00 Hrs) to 08.06.2021 (18.00 Hrs)

Interested tenderers may please refer detailed Notice Inviting Tender (NIT) for eligibility criteria and other details, which can be downloaded from web site www.tenderwizard.in/dae and www.barc.gov.in
Chief Engineer, BARC
For & on behalf of President of India

MAKING HAY

Common crimes dip, Covid-related cases on the rise

MANJU SHETTAR @ Bengaluru

WHILE crimes such as murder, robbery, and chain snatching have dipped in the city thanks to the lockdown, offences surrounding Covid are flourishing. Many are on the prowl to make the most of the pandemic, by conning helpless people amidst this raging health crisis.

The pandemic has created such an opportunity that many fraudsters are thriving by exploiting and extorting people, who are in dire need of medical help, be it an ICU bed, oxygen, or a Remdesivir injection.

"While conventional crimes have dipped due to increased checks to enforce lockdown, cybercrime has continued unchecked. Last year, we had cracked down on those who were producing low-quality or duplicate hand sanitisers and masks, which were in high demand. But in the second wave, there is a whole lot of new scams that are being unearthed. However, they do not pose any major challenge for us to solve, as most of those running these activities are new to the world of crime," said a senior official in the Central Crime Branch (CCB).

> In many cases, it was found that suspects assumed people would not complain against them, as they had helped them by providing what they needed at the right time.
>
> A CCB officer

Almost every day, the police are arresting people for their alleged involvement in black-marketing of Remdesivir injections, and charging exorbitant prices for oxygen cylinders. The probe into the bed-blocking scam has revealed that a huge number of private hospitals were hand-in-glove with fraudsters. Many including doctors were also arrested for issuing fake Covid-19 negative certificates. In another instance, a doctor and another woman were caught for running a 'private vaccination programme' in a house.

Many are charging exorbitant prices for oxygen cylinders | EXPRESS

COMMON COVID CRIMES

- Hoarding of Remdesivir injections
- Charging exorbitant prices for oxygen cylinders
- Issuing fake Covid-19 negative certificates without tests
- Bulk promotions claiming medicine required for Covid treatment is available, and cheating people in need

TRACKING COVID-19

SPEED AND RISE OF COVID-19 CASES IN KARNATAKA

25,979 CASES REPORTED TODAY

31,183 CASES REPORTED YESTERDAY

TALLY STANDS AT

TODAY	24,24,904
YESTERDAY	23,98,925

DEATHS

TODAY	YESTERDAY
626	451

DISCHARGES

TODAY	YESTERDAY
35,573	61,766

ACTIVE CASES

TODAY	YESTERDAY
4,72,986	4,83,204

POSITIVITY RATE

TODAY	8.44%
YESTERDAY	8.39%

MORTALITY RATE

TODAY	1.04%
YESTERDAY	1,02%

RECOVERY RATE

TODAY	79.45%
YESTERDAY	78.82%

The first Covid-19 case in Karnataka was reported on March 8, 2020. Since then until May 23, 2021, a total 24,24,904 cases have been reported in 1 year and 73 days...

1,20,49,483 Total doses administered in state

VACCINATION DRIVE STATUS

Number of people completing vaccination	26,18,850
Health care workers 1st dose	7,06,807
Health care workers 2nd dose	4,66,045
Frontline workers 1st dose	5,43,229
Frontline workers 2nd dose	2,01,750
Age 18-45 1st dose	1,85,541
Above 45 1st dose	79,95,056
Above 45 2nd dose	19,51,055

DISTRICT-WISE COVID CASES

LAST 24 HOURS

7,494 BENGALURU URBAN

400 BENGALURU RURAL

Bagalakot: 218	Chamarajanagar: 407	Dakshina Kannada: 899	Hassan: 1,618	Kolar: 439	Raichur: 540	Udupi: 909
Ballari: 1,190	Chikkballapur: 613	Davanagere: 363	Haveri: 243	Koppal: 356	Ramanagara: 279	Uttara Kannada: 862
Belagavi: 1,066	Chikkamagaluru: 577	Dharwad: 858	Kalaburagi: 234	Mandya: 643	Shivamogga: 643	Vijayapura: 246
Bidar: 49	Chitradurga: 365	Gadag: 371	Kodagu: 329	Mysuru: 2,222	Tumakuru: 1,269	Yadgir: 277

Long-haul Covid haunts patients

2nd wave has brought complications like mucormycosis, pulmonary fibrosis, hypertension

IFFATH FATHIMA @ Bengaluru

HOSPITALS are reporting a much higher number of post-Covid-19 infections compared to what was witnessed during the first wave of the pandemic last year. There is an estimated 40 per cent increase in such cases.

The first wave presented only one-third of moderate to severe cases with post-Covid infections. But now it has shot up to 50-60 per cent of such patients. The infections last up to four weeks after discharge -- which only adds to the burden of bed availability for fresh Covid-19 patients.

This worrisome spike comes in the midst of already existing concerns of lack of beds, oxygen and rising number of cases of mucormycosis (black fungus) being reported from across the state.

And it is not just elderly citizens suffering from post-Covid symptoms, but even younger patients.

Doctors from various hospitals, while confirming the significant increase in post-Covid infections, said more cases of lung fibrosis are being reported, besides pulmonary embolism (blood clotting in lungs) and pneumomediastinum (air leakage inside the chest).

> A multi disciplinary approach, including a pulmonologist, pulmonary rehabilitation specialist and psychological support is required to tackle these cases
>
> Dr Sachin Kumar, Senior Consultant, Sakra World Hospital

Lung fibrosis (or pulmonary fibrosis) is a condition in which lungs become scarred internally over time. Symptoms include shortness of breath, dry cough, fatigued feeling, weight loss and nail clubbing. Complications may include pulmonary hypertension, respiratory failure, pneumothorax (which occurs when air leaks into the space between the lung and the chest wall) and also lung cancer.

Dr Sachin Kumar, Senior Consultant, Pulmonology and Critical Care Medicine, Sakra World Hospital, said, "This time, rare presentations include increased incidence of both subsegmetal pulmonary embolism and pneumomediastinum and post-Covid lung fibrosis. At least 30-40 per cent more cases are reported this time. The main symptoms are persistent high oxygen requirements even after home discharge, besides dry cough and chest discomfort with occasional pain. "

With such cases at Sakra World Hospital, they recently started remote assessment and monitoring system to be used on high-risk post-Covid patients for monitoring from home to a cloud-based central monitoring system. "A multidisciplinary approach, including a pulmonologist, pulmonary rehabilitation specialist and psychological support is required to tackle these cases," said Dr Kumar.

Dr Sachin D, Consultant - Interventional Pulmonology, Critical Care And Sleep Medicine Specialist, Manipal Hospital, Old Airport Road, said delayed resolution of symptoms and persistent post-Covid symptoms for more than 2-3months is unique for the second wave. "People developing post-Covid lung fibrosis is also significantly high during the second wave," he explained.

"Adequate rest and gradual mobilisation with relaxation techniques and sleep hygiene is advised for all patients in Covid recovery. Healthy diet with lots of fluid intake and avoiding heavy exercises immediately after recovery is necessary. Early initiation of anti-fibrotics in people developing lung fibrosis can prevent a permanent progressive lung scarring, and restore lung capacity in such individuals." Dr Sachin said.

Dr Pradeep Rangappa, Senior Consultant - Critical Care, Columbia Asia Referral Hospital, Yeshwanthpur, said psychological symptoms of increased anxiety are also seen. "ICU admissions typically are due to breathlessness and residual lung damage necessitating need for oxygen, VTEs (blood clots in the vein) and sometimes vascular events like heart attacks and strokes are also being reported. Difference in the second wave is that we are increasingly seeing mucormycosis as post-Covid presentation," said Dr Rangappa.

LOCKDOWN... WHERE?

Throwing social distancing norms to the wind, people throng the Begur Road market in Bengaluru on Sunday | ASHISHKRISHNA HP

Budesonide inhalers help Covid patients recover faster: Study

IFFATH FATHIMA @ Bengaluru

THE Budesonide inhaler, used to treat wheezing and asthma, has proven to help Covid-19 patients recover faster and even reduce risk of hospitalisation, according to experts.

A recent study, published in The Lancet, says that from July 16 to December 2020, 146 adult participants were randomly assigned — 73 to usual care — and 73 to Budesonide dry powder using a turbohaler at a dose of 800 microgram per actuation for twice a day within seven days of the onset of mild symptoms.

The primary aim of the study was to check if these patients, being treated at home, required hospitalisation despite using Budesonide. The participants had symptoms such as fever, cough, headache, fatigue and loss of smell and taste.

The study showed that the primary need for hospitalisation was only in 3 per cent in the participants who took Budesonide, while it was 14 per cent among those under usual care. Patients under usual care needed to visit the hospital as their oxygen levels dropped and some even had pulmonary embolism, while others needed additional respiratory support. However, this was not seen in the Budesonide group.

Further, those in the Budesonide group had lesser temperature and also the need for antibiotics was significantly less (27% required it) when compared to those in the usual care (50%). Also, the recovery period was seven days for the Budesonide group, while it was eight for those under usual care.

> The study was done on the younger age group. In the second wave, we are seeing the younger generation getting largely affected and hence, this study becomes a lot more pertinent Budesonide inhalers are safe
>
> Dr Pradeep Rangappa, member, Covid State Expert Committee

Dr Pradeep Rangappa, member, Covid State Expert Committee and Intensivist, Coloumbia Asia Hospital, Bengaluru, said, "The study was done on the younger age group which is less than 45 years. In the second wave, we are seeing the younger generation getting largely affected and hence, this study becomes a lot more pertinent. Budesonide inhalers are safe and are widely available. By looking at the studies done so far, we can say that there is merit in using it."

Dr Sachin D, Consultant, Interventional Pulmonology, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine Specialist, Manipal Hospitals, said, "Methadose inhaler with pacer is more preferably used as it is more effective. It should be started as early as possible, preferably within seven days of onset of symptoms. At our hospital, we have been using Budesonide inhalers for mild cases and it has helped patients with good recovery. Even those not having cough are given this as it helps in reducing fever along with other medications. In case of dry powder inhalers, what patients should remember is that they need to rinse their mouth after using it as it can cause Candida fungal infection."

Villages to get vehicles to move patients to CCCs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

AS Covid-19 cases continue to go up in rural areas, the State Government is going all out to strength medical infrastructure to help patients in villages.

The Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department is planning to provide vehicles to villages to transport patients to the nearest Covid Care Centre (CCC) free of cost.

Officials are looking for private partners who can donate vehicles for free. Wherever vehicles are now available, the local panchayats have been told to hire one for the next few months.

There are over 6,000 panchayats in the state.

Panchayats can utilise the Rs 50,000 that had been allotted to them for various miscellaneous expenses. This apart, local task force committees have been given the responsibility of ensuring that people get vaccinated.

ICU on wheels

The State Government is also looking at ways to provide intensive care. The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) converted buses that have covered 9 lakh km into 'ICUs on wheels', that can provide oxygen and monitor patients.

Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation and other state road transport corporations will develop 100 such buses that will be given to 100 backward villages that lack access to hospitals.

Researcher dies of Covid after getting 2 doses of vax

RANJANI MADHAVAN @ Bengaluru

DR NS Murthy (76), research director at the division of Research and Patents, MS Ramaiah Medical College, who took both doses of the Covishield, passed away due to Covid-19, earlier this month. He took his first dose on January 21 and second dose four weeks later. On April 8, he developed symptoms of diarrhoea and weakness and was admitted to MS Ramaiah Hospital on April 15.

"Initially, his lungs were okay, but his inflammatory markers were high. On April 25, his oxygen levels reduced and he was shifted to the ICU. He was put on non-invasive ventilation. For a week, he was comfortable, but soon his condition deteriorated and his lungs were affected," said Dr Rooparani, ICU incharge and associate professor, Anesthesiology and Critical Care, MS Ramaiah Medical College Hospital.

He was intubated for a week and on May 7, he succumbed to the virus. Dr Rooparani said vaccines are supposed to reduce severity of the infection but efficacy of this vaccine was around 70%. She said that his age and comorbidity (hypertension) could be contributing factors."There are a lot of people in our Covid-ICU who have taken their first or both doses of the vaccine. It is possible that the antibody response was less despite inoculation," she added.

Commenting on this, Dr C N Manjunath, director, Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research and member of Karnataka Covid-19 Technical Advisory Committee, said that in rare cases, people can succumb, despite vaccination. "In some people, immunogenic response can be poor, irrespective of which vaccine they take," he said.

CAUSE FOR WORRY

THREE SUSPECTED BLACK FUNGUS DEATHS IN STATE

ARUNKUMAR HURALIMATH, TUSHAR A MAJUKAR @ Hubballi, Belagavi

THREE suspected mucormycosis or black fungus deaths came to light in the State on Sunday.

While a 40-year-old man is said to have succumbed to the fungal infection in Hubballi, two more deaths have been reported from Belagavi district.

In Hubballi, a 40-year-old man allegedly died due to suspected mucormycosis at the city's KIMS Hospital on Saturday night.

The man had recently recovered from Covid-19. The doctors, however, are yet to declare the death as caused due to black fungus.

KIMS Hospital is one of the designated centres in the State to treat black fungus cases. There are more than 80 patients from various districts and from neighbouring states getting treated for the fungal infection at the hospital. The hospital has been witnessing black fungus cases for the last 2-3 weeks. Four patients successfully recovered from the infection and were recently discharged.

Like other hospitals in the State, KIMS Hospital also faces shortage of medicines to treat Mucormycosis. On Saturday, Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar visited KIMS Hospital and assured of supplying the required drugs to the institute.

An attendant of a patient told TNIE that his father had recovered from Covid-19 and discharged two weeks ago. "He was admitted to KIMS again on Thursday for black fungus treatment. He was not given the drug to fight the infection. When asked, doctors said that the hospital had no stock of the drug. I checked with a private hospital and they said each injection will cost Rs 45,000 and nine such injections are required. It is not affordable for a middle-class person like me," he added.

Meanwhile, in Belagavi district, Dr SV Muniyal, district health and family welfare officer, said that while one person succumbed in Athani, another person died in Gokak. He said both were aged above 70. Dr Muniyal said doctors have identified seven cases of black fungus in the district.

Also, two cases of white fungus have also been reported in the district, he said.

What is mucormycosis...

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines mucormycosis "as a serious but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes. These molds live throughout the environment. Mucormycosis mainly affects people who have health problems or take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness. It most commonly affects the sinuses or the lungs after inhaling fungal spores from the air. It can also occur on the skin after a cut, burn, or other types of skin injury".

'Treatment at all govt hospitals'

The State Government has issued a circular on mucormycosis treatment to be extended to all government hospitals, government medical colleges and district hospitals. Also, patients should be treated in taluk hospitals based on the facilities at the hospitals.

Police top brass distribute O_2 concentrators to dist hosps

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

THE State police have gone that extra mile in helping not only the police personnel, but the general public with the all-important oxygen concentrators, which were donated by philanthropists for policemen.

"People are donating oxygen concentrators for police personnel, but we felt that to only restrict their use for our people would be selfish at a time when there is an acute shortage of oxygen," said Director General and Inspector General (DG&IGP) Praveen Sood. He said he had received 17 concentrators, which have been donated to district hospitals through district superintendents of police (SPs) and district commissioners. "The objective is that oxygen should be made available to all in need, but priority should be given to frontline police personnel, who need oxygen," said the police chief.

He added that because of aggressive mass vaccination of the police force, only 100 police personnel have been hospitalised in the second wave, while the others who got infected are in home isolation. "Out of 87,775 police personnel, 73,503 have received both doses of the vaccine," he added.

Praveen Sood

Seemant Kumar Singh

Meanwhile, Additional Director General of Police, Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), Seemant Kumar Singh with the help of a group of donors donated 130 oxygen concentrators to district hospitals in the last 25 days.

"We donated oxygen concentrators free of cost to all 30 districts in the State in the last 25 days. This was possible through donors from across the country and overseas. We have formed a WhatsApp group – O2 -- which has donors and people who search where oxygen concentrators can be sourced from and inform the group. The donors then import them and I facilitate their distribution through district SPs," said Singh.

The ADGP said that to make use of the oxygen concentrators, he on the advice of the DG&IGP roped in the SPs. Last year, Singh had helped over one lakh migrant workers with free ration. He had also helped their movement back to their native places by train after his personal phone had gone viral as helpline number.

COVID BYTES

Now, check Remdesivir allocation online

BENGALURU: A patient can now check if the drug Remdesivir has been issued to the hospital in their name on the website of the State Covid-19 war room. The patient has to enter his or her SRF ID and One Time Password that her or she will receive. The patient will also get an SMS from the Drugs Control Department, if Remdesivir has been issued to the hospital in their name. "The technology-based system is designed to provide transparency in Remdesivir allocation. If the hospital does not provide the drug for the infected person, the same can be reported to the government. With this system, let's cut down on black marketing and corruption," tweeted Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar.

Kerala reported four more deaths due to mucormycosis or black fungus on Sunday. The victims — two from Ernakulam and two from Pathanamthitta — were undergoing treatment for the disease at different hospitals in Kochi

Four coastal districts likely to be most affected — Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur — have already finalised evacuation plans, spruced up shelters

CYCLONE YAAS: ODISHA READY WITH RESCUE PLAN

Odisha Fire Services prep for Cyclone Yaas at Bhubaneswar Fire Station | IRFANA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bhubaneswar

AS Odisha braces up to face a very severe cyclonic storm, the State government has prepared rescue and evacuation plans based on three parameters. The government is gearing up to deal with the cyclone with a speed ranging from 120 to 165 km per hour, rainfall between 250 and 300 centimeter, and storm surge of three to four metre in coastal areas.

Four coastal districts likely to be most affected by the cyclone, Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur, have already finalised their evacuation plans and spruced up the cyclone shelters. Evacuation of people from all vulnerable places will start either from Monday evening or Tuesday morning.

Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) PK Jena said the government has taken all preemptive and preparatory measures for evacuation of people from vulnerable areas keeping in view of likely inundation of low lying areas due to storm surge. He said 22 teams of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), more than 50 teams of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) and more than 175 teams of Fire Services have been deployed in vulnerable zones of the districts. Besides, 10 more NDRF teams will be airlifted to Odisha, he added.

The SRC said deployment of rescue and evacuation teams will be increased considering the severeness of the cyclone and the path to be taken by it. There will be a more clear picture regarding the landfall of the cyclone and its speed by Monday evening, he added.

As directed by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, the SRC on Sunday visited Balasore, the district to be worst-hit, and reviewed the preparedness with collectors of Balasore and Bhadrak. Collectors were asked for better compliance to Covid protocols in all the shelters, Covid and general hospitals during the period.

TN fishermen warned not to venture into sea

Nagappatinam: The fisheries department has warned fishermen not to venture into the Bay of Bengal as Cyclone Yaas is expected to drift across the eastern waters. Fishers were asked to keep their boats, engines and nets at safe places. Storm signal cages have been hoisted in port offices in Nagapattinam and Karaikal. Even vallam boats, which are used to travel for about 10 nautical miles, were asked to refrain from fishing. Mechanised fishing boats such as trawlers and gillnetters continue to remain at harbours due to the annual fishing ban. According to IMD) the cyclone is expected to make landfall in West Bengal and Odisha later this week.

Thunderstorms across TS till May 25

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Hyderabad

THE India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow warning against thunderstorms accompanied by lightning across the State till May 25. According to the IMD, the State will witness thunderstorms and gusty winds, as it is under the influence of cyclone Yaas.

Yaas is likely to intensify into a 'cyclonic storm' in the next 24 hours, and a 'very severe cyclonic storm' by Tuesday. "Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning and gusty winds at 30-40 kmph are very likely to occur at isolated places in Mulugu, Kothagudem, Khammam, Nalgonda, Yadadri-Bhuvanagiri Rangareddy, Hyderabad, Medchal, Karimnagar, Mahbubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet, and Jogulamba-Gadwal districts of Telangana," the IMD said, in a 24-hour warning issued on Sunday.

On Sunday, most of the districts saw temperatures above 40 degree Celsius. Karimnagar, Warangal, Jagtial, Peddapalli, Mancherial and Jayashankar-Bhupalpally, in fact, experienced higher temperatures above 42 degree Celsius, as per the automatic weather stations of Telangana State Development and Planning Society.

Meanwhile, Hyderabad registered a maximum daytime temperature of 38.2 degree Celsius. According to the IMD, temperatures in the city are likely to remain between 38 and 40 degree Celsius until the end of May.

Borders tense as TS stops vehicles from AP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Vijayawada/Kurnool

WITH the neighboring Telangana State implementing the lockdown restrictions strictly and imposing restrictions on inter-state movement of vehicles even during the relaxation hours of 6 am to 10 am, the situation at the inter-state borders witnessed stranding of hundreds of vehicles at the borders in Krishna, Guntur and Kurnool districts on Sunday. Till Saturday, the Telangana State allowed movement of vehicles into its territory during the curfew relaxation hours of 6 am to 10 am but from Sunday, it made e-pass mandatory to enter the State.

While Andhra Pradesh police allowing all the vehicles leaving the state and entering from Telangana during the relaxation hours 6 am to 12 noon, Telangana police are insisting on e-passes at borders and allowed only valid e-pass holders and essential services staff to travel into its borders. Earlier, one can enter Telangana state during the relaxation hours from 6 am to 10 am and Andhra border from 6 am to 12 noon without any pass.

As a result, hundreds of vehicles lined up at the Ramapuram village near Kodad in Telangana's Suryapet district as police stopped vehicles without having an e-pass to enter Telangana. Ambulances and other vehicles for emergency use, however, were exempted from the restriction. Tension prevailed for a while at AP-TS border check post with commuters arguing with Telangana police over enforcing new rules of allowing vehicles and for not giving prior information about the new decision taken by the latter's government.

"We are unaware of the new restriction. I have travelled all the way from Vizag to here only to get stopped and stranded," rued a commuter explaining his agony with the local media.

According to Krishna district police, those who do not have an e-pass were asked to apply with the Telangana government on an urgent basis and those requests denied were sent back. "With the TS police stopping vehicles from crossing the border check post, hundreds of vehicles were stranded at Ramapuram," Nandigama Deputy Superintendent of Police G Nageswara Reddy said and urged people wishing to travel to Telangana from Andhra Pradesh to apply for an e-pass and avoid embarrassing experiences at borders.

Vehicles from Andhra Pradesh prevented from entering Telangana at the Pullur border of Kurnool district on Sunday | EXPRESS

With the TS police stopping vehicles from crossing the border check post, hundreds of vehicles were stranded at Ramapuram

G Nageswara Reddy, Nandigama Deputy Superintendent of Police

Telangana e-pass must for travel to Hyderabad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Hyderabad

THE horror of vehicles waiting for interminable hours at the border check-posts for permission to enter Telangana returned on Sunday with police setting up barricades and refusing to allow anyone without ePasses issued by the Telangana government.

This has led to a long line-up of vehicles as the unwary travellers did not know that they had to obtain ePasses which become mandatory over night. Earlier the Telangana police used to allow vehicles if they had ePasses issued by the states from where they began their journey.

Barring ambulances and vehicles carrying patients of Covid-19, the police posted at different checkposts at the border of Telangana stood firm, despite pleas by the travellers to allow them. They kept showing the ePasses issued by their state but the police remained unmoved. As the police set up barricades, vehicles stopped one after the other for a distance of five km.

VANISHING ACT

Shangumugham beach in Thiruvananthapuram completely disappeared and the road till the airport was almost washed away by strong waves due to the low pressure formed over the Arabian Sea after Cyclone Tauktae hit Kerala last week | BP DEEPU

KIADB's former officer booked for cheating

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

TWO separate cases have been registered against a former Special Land Acquisition Officer (SLAO) of Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board in High Grounds police station, for allegedly releasing compensation of more than Rs 1 crore illegally.

Nagasundaramurthy P, a 64-year-old resident of KHB Colony, has filed a complaint stating that he possessed land in Nidavanda village of Somapura Hobli in Nelamangala and the KIADB had acquired lands in Dobbespet and Thyamagondlu "In 2015, I came to know from my neighbouring landowners that the government had acquired the land and given compensation. I had not received any notice regarding the same. When I went to the KIADB office to enquire, I came to know that my land located in four survey numbers was also acquired. A person had created fake documents impersonating me and had submitted them to the KIADB and a compensation of Rs. 81.45 lakh was sanctioned to the person," he alleged.

Another complaint is filed by Somanna MB, a 76-year-old resident of Agrahara Dasarahalli. He has alleged that the compensation of Rs. 23.40 lakh for his land in Nidavanda was sanctioned to some other person. The police have registered two FIRs and have named former SLAO B Shivaswamy and others as accused.

EXPRESS READ

Satheesan reaches out to Cong leaders

T'Puram: A day after he was made the opposition leader, V D Satheesan has reached out to senior leaders to garner their support, ahead of the first session of the new assembly on Monday. Satheesan's first meeting was with K C Venugopal, the AICC general secretary in-charge of the party, in Thiruvananthapuram. Satheesan tweeted that he discussed the current political scenario, and "thanked him for his support in choosing me as the LoP, Kerala". Satheesan, a fifth-term MLA from Paravur, later visited KPCC President Mullappally Ramachandran at Indira Bhavan, the KPCC headquarters in the capital. Later he met former KPCC president V M Sudheeran, who said he was confident that Satheesan can guide the party keeping aside the group interests. ENS

HIT BY PANDEMIC, KARNATAKA WEAVERS SEEK GOVT ASSISTANCE

MAHESH M GOUDAR @Bagalkot

MARKANDEYA I from Ilkal has been struggling to make ends meet post the outbreak of second wave of coronavirus. "I have stopped weaving temporarily as prices of the fabric have dropped in the market," he says.

The Covid-induced lockdown for two consecutive years has worsened the condition of thousands of weavers, whose livelihood is dependent solely on weaving. Ilkal sarees and blouse pieces produced in Guledagudda are world-famous and Maharashtra is the biggest market for both the fabrics.

Iranna M (48), a weaver from Guledagudda, said, "The situation has turned grim as many weavers are struggling to sell their product. The lockdown

has affected the production and a huge unsold inventory has piled up with many weavers. Prices of raw materials have gone up but prices of blouses have reduced in the market. We are forced to sell our products at a loss." "Members of Charka, a non-profit organisation, are helping us market blouse pieces online. It is helping a few weavers to run their family in this difficult time. There is zero help from the government to weavers in this time of health crisis. Many weavers are planning to shut units as there is no future for this profession," said weaver Iranna.

Ravindra Kalaburagi, senior member of Shankrambari Weavers' Cooperative Society, pointed out that, "The state government has assured that it will directly purchase sarees from weavers and give it to frontline workers but nothing has been done till date. The state government has completely ignored weavers in the recen Covid relief package. Even the textile minister is least bothered to visit us or hear our grievances. If the government fails to come to act, we will stage an indefinite protest after the lockdown."

CRIME PATROL

Duo held, 9.3kg gold found after highway chase

Bengaluru: Sleuths from the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence arrested two men for smuggling gold, and recovered 9.3kg of gold in crude. Police said based on a tip-off, a team of officials intercepted the Kerala registered vehicle near Chitradurga, after setting up a blockade. However, the suspect vehicle, with two men on board, crashed through the barricade and tried to mow down the DRI team, in a bid to flee. Officials gave chase for over 30 minutes, before they could stop the vehicle, which was later confiscated. They found the crude gold concealed in a custom-made cavity under the front passenger's seat. The accused carried no documents, and confessed that the gold had been smuggled into the country in paste form, through international airports.

4 rowdies arrested while planning to rob people

Bengaluru: The Central Crime Branch (CCB) police have arrested four rowdies on charges of planning dacoity and seized weapons from them. The accused have been identified as John William alias Appu (29), Shashidhar alias Gunda (31), Parthiban (33), and Micheal alias Jackson (23). According to the police, the dou were waiting near a cemetery on Berlie Street in Shanthinagar to rob passersby of their valuables. Acting on a tip-off, the sleuths of the Organised Crime Wing of the CCB nabbed the four. "The arrested are associates of notorious rowdy Nagaraj alias Naga. William is a rowdy-sheeter of Wilson Garden police station and has cases of attempt to murder, robbery and NDPS cases against him. The three others have dacoity and robbery cases against them," the police said. ENS

CELEBRATION, BUT AT WHAT COST?

Covid norms go for a toss during 'flight wedding'

VIGNESH V @ Madurai

IF you think the times are not conducive for big fat wedding, think again. Not everyone will subscribe to your point of view. At least there will be a few like Jeevanantham and Muthu who conducted the marriage of their children aboard a chartered fight, violating Covid protocols.

Sources said that as many as 161 relatives of the duo boarded the 'marriage flight' that took off from Madurai International Airport at 7 am on Sunday. "The flight was air-bound for two hours and the couple tied the knot when the aircraft was hovering over Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple," they said, adding that the photographs of the function revel that those who attended the mid-air 'marriage failed to even wear the face masks properly and to maintain physical distancing.

The 'extravagant' ceremony was held at a time when the State government has clearly stipulated that not more than 50 persons in marriage functions. The wedding photos that are being circulated in the social media got both positive and negative feedbacks. A few opined that there is no need for such a large gathering at the time of the second wave.

Superintendent of Police Sujith Kumar said that they are yet to take a decision on whether the case should be registered in the city or rural limits as it's a "peculiar violation".

Airport Director S Senthil Valavan said that the private airline had applied for the charter flight service and the airport authorities had approved it. "The authorities from the airport were not aware of the mid-air marriage. There is a clear violation of Covid precautionary norms," he said, adding that he had directed the airline service to give an explanation by Monday.

Collector Dr S Aneesh Sekhar said that an inquiry is underway and appropriate action would be initiated. Meanwhile, the city police registered 47 curfew violation cases in Town range, 26 in Tiruparankundram, 45 in Thilagar Thidal, 10 in Tallakulam, 64 in Anna Nagar range on Saturday.

Ensure availability of essentials: Stalin to district heads ahead of stricter rules

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ CHENNAI

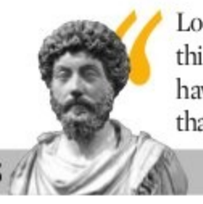
CHIEF Minister MK Stalin has urged all District Collectors to ensure availability of essentials such as medicines, medicated oxygen, water and vegetables to the public during the intensified lockdown this week. Attending a review meeting with all Collectors and Superintendents of Police on Sunday, through videoconference from the Secretariat, Stalin also asked the Collectors to confirm distribution of Covid monetary relief to all ration cardholders.

People throng markets a day before complete lockdown is set to be imposed in Chennai | DEBADATTA MALLICK

"Along with the Agriculture department officials and local body authorities, the district heads also should monitor arrangements for sale of vegetables on pushcarts or other vehicles. Distribution of milk and drinking water must be ensured," the CM said.

Instructing the officials to take steps to ensure availability of all essentials in hospitals too, Stalin said, "The medical facilities in our State should have enough stock of all supplies. Patients should be transported to hospitals and screening centres following protocol and without delay. The vaccination drive too should not face any hindrance," he added.

EDITORIAL



Look at what you have that you value most and think of how much you'd crave them if you didn't have them. Beware lest you cherish them so dearly that their loss would destroy your peace of mind

Marcus Aurelius

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Ramnath Goenka

DECONSTRUCTING DIDI'S HISTRIONICS AT MODI'S MEET

On the face of it, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's recent outburst against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not making provisions for CMs to speak at a virtual meeting of district magistrates (DMs) on Covid management may appear petulant. She called it a flop show, though she knew fully well that the meeting was designed for the DMs to speak and the CMs to listen. Her equally canny counterparts had no problem with the arrangement. Most of them know when to pick a fight and when to go along with the Centre smoothly. It makes no sense to be always in combat mode. As such, there was hardly any resonance to Mamata's barbs, and the BJP and its troll army's rebuttal, too, was low-key. Explaining away Mamata's sharp language as that of a street fighter for whom offence is the best form of defence could be naive. She is too smart for that. So, what is she playing at?

A couple of weeks ago, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said talks to build a national opposition alliance would start soon and that the Congress would be the soul of the new front. But that goes against Mamata's ambition to lead the national pushback against the BJP following her massive victory in the recent Bengal elections. The first step for the build-up is to hold a massive victory rally in Kolkata—with invites to heads of opposition parties—where she is idolised as Durga and projected as the only leader capable of stopping the BJP election machine. But the ongoing Covid wave is delaying the mega event. And Raut pulled a fast one by suggesting a central role for the Congress in the new arrangement, though his party treats it like a doormat in Maharashtra. As for Mamata, since she single-handedly achieved the BJP's goal of making Bengal Congress-mukt, she wouldn't want the grand old party having any significant say in the opposition grouping. So, the barbs she hurled at Modi were perhaps an oblique shout out to fellow opposition parties to take her leadership credentials as a giant slayer seriously. Mind games for the opposition leadership space have just begun.

BIZARRE STRICT LOCKDOWN ORDERS

The Tamil Nadu government on Saturday extended a lockdown in force for a fortnight by another week and made it stricter. In doing so, however, it revealed a failure to learn from the lessons of the past. In 2020, as the nation first faced the Covid-19 pandemic, the Union government announced a nationwide shutdown with just about four hours' notice with few details of the nature of lockdown, throwing the country and its economy into turmoil it has yet to fully recover from. In April 2020, Tamil Nadu compounded that error by ordering a "lockdown within a lockdown" forcing large numbers of people to scramble for provisions and groceries. These sudden, poorly thought-out moves have hurt the people, both by forcing large groups to converge in closed spaces to make purchases risking a spike in infections as well as by eroding public faith in government. It's hard to stay calm and carry on, when your government might upend your universe any moment.

Tamil Nadu, which reported 35,483 cases on Sunday, has a test positivity rate of over 20%. The state, despite having relatively better infrastructure than many others, is stretched for beds, oxygen and medical staff. There is no doubt that a strict lockdown is the need of the hour. However, what is the purpose of a lockdown that allows no grocery or provisions shops to function for a week but allows all shops—including textiles and jewellers—to be open for a full day ahead of the new lockdown? By now, surely the government should have learnt that it is better to allow people to shop in many stores over the whole week—reducing crowds in closed, poorly ventilated spaces where risk of disease transmission is highest—rather than allow all people to shop for a week in a limited number of stores over a single day. Further, the state is yet to explain how families that do not have the wherewithal to purchase and stock provisions for a full week will manage in the coming seven days, given that the government's promised grocery kits and the second tranche of relief will only be distributed from June 3. Authorities must place both science as well as empathy and an understanding of human behaviour at the centre of decision-making. It is the only way we will defeat the virus.

Various studies on healthcare workers are showing an alarming increase in depression, anxiety, sleep problems and even suicidal tendencies

HEALTHCARE ON THE BRINK: A CRY FOR HELP

DR MAYANK RAI
Psychiatrist, AIIMS, Rishikesh

DR DEBANJAN BANERJEE
Psychiatrist, NIMHANS, Bengaluru

AMIT BANDRE

Amidst the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, a healthcare system that was already crumbling under the incremental load is gasping for breath, not just due to a lack of oxygen (pun intended) but severe shortfalls in all the basic medical amenities required for preservation and sustenance of life. The second wave was a rude shock to a society that had been preoccupied by state elections in the weeks when it crept up on us. The general public is now getting a taste of a differently morbid flavour of news every day morning. The news of numbers, pyres, chaos and propaganda. For healthcare workers, it's a nightmare morphing into reality

Where do we start investigating this sickness befalling the healthcare services in this country? Getting to the basics—allocation of funds for health infrastructure, which has improved over years but still falls short by more than a mile. For a country that is obsessed with the idea of becoming a superpower in the near future, India spends a miserly 1.6% of its GDP on healthcare, a far cry from the at least 5% recommended by the WHO to meet the demands of the burgeoning population. After about 75 years since gaining Independence, the general callousness and shortsightedness of successive governments at the helm (irrespective of political colour) have left people dying on roads, under the trees and inside their vehicles due to lack of medical attention. With every disconsolate cry and the piercing gasp of anguish that emanates out of the mouths of the helpless and the dying, a sliver of human spirit is chipped off.

To have an idea of what kind of treatment is being given to the general population, we have to know how the essential healthcare providers are being treated. As happens during wartime, where soldiers are herded together and left to fend for themselves, doctors along with nurses and attendants are being treated as fodder for the cannons during this Covid war. Soldiers are at least provided with arms and ammunition for their battles, whereas these frontline warriors are short of essential tools like antivirals and oxygen in this fight. To make it worse, if they fall ill in the line of duty, they won't be able to arrange a bed or an oxygen cylinder for themselves. How cruel is this irony!

According to the Indian Medical Association (IMA), about 800 doctors have been martyred in this long-drawn battle against the pandemic. Physicians are working in truly abominable conditions—overcrowded hospitals doused in fear and panic, inhumane working hours, sleepless nights and days, public scrutiny, political and administrative pressure, risk of getting infected, to identify a few. They are not allowed any leaves, even to take care of their own near and dear ones or even to quit their jobs if they simply don't feel up to it. Work policies are inflexible. In various parts of the country, resident doctors and nursing staff aren't being paid their regular salaries and are being held responsible for various situations out of their control. The ensuing period has witnessed them struggling with serious physical and mental issues. There are various studies on healthcare workers showing an alarming increase in depression, anxiety, sleep problems and even suicidal tendencies. Recently a resident doctor in Delhi committed suicide after a prolonged posting in a Covid ICU where he witnessed deaths of many patients despite him giving it his all to save them. This is a desperate wake-up call for all the stakeholders before it's too late to stem this rot. Mental health issues have assumed an impetus during this pandemic, something that was long due. What about the emotional and social problems of one of the most vulnerable sections?

> Recently a resident doctor in Delhi committed suicide after a prolonged posting in a Covid ICU where he witnessed deaths of many patients despite him giving it his all to save them. This is a desperate wake-up call for all the stakeholders before it's too late to stem this rot

To add to this already agonising situation, the administration is still struggling to rein in the rampant black-marketing and stockpiling of drugs such as Remdesivir injections and even oxygen cylinders. These essential medications are being auctioned off and sold to the highest bidder. Remdesivir injections, which generally cost around ₹800-1,000 per vial, are being sold at around ₹20,000- 40,000 per vial, which challenges health and purses at the same time. Surely, no price is too high to pay for your or your loved one's life. To add insult to injury, there are some pathologically evil rackets flagrantly manufacturing and supplying fake drugs to add to their corpus. So, even after shelling out all your savings, you may end up with an ineffectual injection.

The Indian Medical Service (IMS) could have been conceived along the lines of IAS, IPS, IES and IFS. The medical and healthcare delivery system needs to be placed in the hands of those who understand it best. There have been repeated requests from various doctor's associations and bodies for the government to consider this proposition, but to no avail. This pandemic has exposed the Centre-state divide, with a lack of homogenisation in matters of healthcare delivery, and laid bare the ineptitude of bureaucracy in dealing with the matters of prevention and treatment of the corona invasion. This failing system requires an in-depth cleansing and an overhaul of its long-neglected healthcare infrastructure. And setting up the IMS would be the first of many steps required to mitigate this impending cataclysm and others to come.

We totally agree that the administration and governance are trying their best at all levels. They are also panic-stricken due to this unprecedented crisis. We also agree that when there is a war, the army needs to fight, period. However, when the enemy is unknown, fatalities are high and the battle is prolonged, the army needs a bit of extra care! That's all we have to say as physicians.

This is no complaint, no grudge, no blame game, no finger-pointing. The frustration-filled lines above are a mere appeal to be listened to while we strive to protect others at the frontline. We may have chosen this profession out of our own will, but that does not necessarily grant us immunity from the sufferings and losses of humankind. Some of you may ignorantly argue, "You need to be stronger!" Trust me, we have been so for more than a year. Now we are at the brink of our sanity.

Desperate times call for desperate measures and while digging a well when the fire's raging isn't exactly foresight, there might still be something left worth saving.

(rai.mayank0@gmail.com, dr.djan88@gmail.com)

NOT JUST VAX SUPPLY, DISTRIBUTION A CHALLENGE TOO

AMAR PATNAIK

BJD Rajya Sabha MP, ex-CAG bureaucrat with a PhD in management and now an advocate

Whenever we have a shortage in any essential item (goods or services), we tend to have a riot-like situation due to the size of our population. Given the number of vaccine doses required vis-a-vis the number manufactured and the miniscule percentage of people who have been inoculated so far, there is a real chance of this happening, particularly in rural areas. There are two aspects in this, viz. production (supply) and distribution.

Increasing supply: As regards enhancing production, the government's recent announcement that 216 crore doses would be available between August-December would certainly come as a relief to all. However, what does the country do until August when the second wave is already raging across the country and most worryingly, spreading into the interiors of rural India?

Waiver of IPR restrictions so that domestic manufacturers can produce the generic vaccine will be hard and time-consuming as it requires unanimous consensus from all WTO members. Hence, it might not be very useful to tackle the immediate and short-term supply crunch but would be valuable to increase supplies in the future.

As regards vaccines approved by the drug regulator and available in the country, the Russian vaccine Sputnik V, recently approved for emergency usage in the country, is the only one in addition to Covishield and Covaxin. The vaccine candidates of Biological E, Zydus Cadila and Gennova (mRNA) and Bharat Biotech's nasal vaccine are in various stages of clinical trials. The SII's Novovax is still in clinical trials and is likely to enter the markets only by September. The international vaccine manufacturers Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson (single dose), who are yet to be approved by the drug controller, have stated that they can supply only in the third quarter of this year if they are assured faster regulatory clearances and freedom on pricing and exports. However, the silver lining is that the government has now clarified that any vaccine approved by the WHO and FDA, US, can be imported and administered in India.

Thus, in the immediate term, the only way to increase supply is through global vaccine imports. Multiple states including Odisha, Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have decided to float global tenders, which will allow them to bridge the shortage in central supply. Looking at the world market for vaccines, Pfizer plans to ramp up its manufacturing to produce 250 crore doses by the end of this year, Moderna plans to facilitate 70 crore doses in 2021 and J&J targets manufacturing 100 crore doses by the end of this year. However, import of these vaccines would be heavily dependent upon the real possibility of export bans by the respective countries as we hear the WHO expressing concern that rich countries have now started vaccinating children two years and above whereas several nations have not even administered the first dose to their frontline Covid warriors. Hence, these global tenders floated by the states may not bear much fruit as the vaccine manufacturers globally are limited and armed with patent rights.

Way forward to augment supplies in the immediate run: Diversifying domestic production is the need of the hour. Since Covaxin is an indigenously produced vaccine, the Indian government can allow other domestic manufacturers to produce it by waiving patent rights. The government can also use the compulsory licensing mechanism under Section 92 of the Patent Act as well as the WTO's TRIPS regime to allow domestic manufactures to also produce vaccines without fear of IPR violations. However, this may also take time as vaccine manufacture is a complicated process involving transfer of know-how as well. It is also important that the Central government quickly authorises emergency usage of vaccines that have already undergone rigorous trials in developed nations and have high efficacy. It will also increase vaccine competition and the consumers will have the option to choose from multiple vaccines, which in turn will help bring down prices and break possible monopolies. All this however is without prejudice to the fact that since the numbers of vaccine manufacturers are almost the same, they may still form a cartel thus defeating the purpose of the global tender.

> So far India has vaccinated its people mostly in cities. When it comes to rural areas, infrastructure as well as personnel issues have to be addressed in order to ensure that the administration regime complies with Covid protocol. ... Last-mile delivery itself could be another huge, intractable bottleneck

Distribution challenges: The next issue is the challenges in distribution of vaccines in rural areas. So far India has vaccinated its people mostly in cities. When it comes to rural areas, infrastructure as well as personnel issues have to be addressed in order to ensure that the vaccine administration regime complies with Covid protocol. Failure would lead to vaccine riots since people by now have gathered knowledge that vaccines are the only panacea. Another issue would be the lack of internet facility besides low tele-density (40-60%) without which logging into the COWIN app would not be possible, failing which vaccines would be denied to them. Last-mile delivery itself could be another huge, intractable bottleneck.

Conclusion: As the Covid-19 strain mutates, the government needs to prepare for a scenario where there is a need for booster shots targeting the emerging variants almost every year. Hence, it is important to build a supply chain of vaccines in the country that is resilient in the long term. If India is to vaccinate its population every year, then our demand would be the largest in the world, which itself should be a very attractive proposition for any global manufacturer.

India must also carefully calibrate its import policy to develop the correct incentives for global manufacturers to supply their vaccines in the country. To begin with, we must not ask every state to get into a contract with manufacturers separately as we may not be able to leverage placing large orders, which is an advantage for India considering our large population. The Centre must bulk buy vaccines, which will give it the negotiating power in the global market, and then distribute them amongst the states that can focus on last-mile delivery to each citizen.

(Views are personal)

(amar_patnaik@yahoo.com)

MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

Tackling black fungus

The black fungus illness has added to the country's worries. The shortage of ICU beds has become a bigger issue due to this. The government needs to take precautionary measures to tackle this. This problem needs to be controlled before it surges further.

Manoj Kumar Jena, Cuttack

Has raised alarms

The sharp spike in mucormycosis (black fungus) infections has raised alarms among people. The use of tap water for humidifiers along with the growth of fungus in cannulas and ICU equipment are believed to be probable causes for the disease. Even the excess use of steroids could be a reason. Though the Centre said it is not an outbreak, 10 states have declared it an epidemic.

N J Ravi Chander, Bengaluru

Silence is most powerful

The arrogance of Baba Ramdev, yoga instructor and founder of Patanjali, who is reported to have called allopathy a stupid science and practitioners of modern medicine as murderers, is not right. But the IMA seeking action against him will make no difference as he is protected by friends in power. For such arrogant and ignorant people, silence is the most powerful weapon of contempt.

Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati

Ramdev's impunity

By deriding allopathy, Ramdev has shown a sense of impunity gained through his close proximity to the powers that be. It is baffling that the Union health minister, an allopathy doctor himself, has paid no heed to the IMA's demands.

A Raveendranath, Aranmula

More things are essential

The government must change the definition of essential services. It is not limited to just vegetables, groceries, medicines and milk. For example, if your mobile is out of order, no repair shop is open. A lot of work is done using phones, and OTPs have become indispensable for banking and other transactions. This is more problematic for people working from home. Even if your vehicle breaks down in the middle of the road, there is no one to call to fix it.

G Ulaganathan, email

Atrocious fuel price rise

The continued rise in petrol prices, that too during the second wave, is atrocious. Fuel prices all over the world are going down due to less demand. Fuel is an essential need of the people, but the government is heavily taxing it as though it is a luxury item. It should be brought under the GST umbrella so that a rational tax is put on it.

T Kailash Ditya, Hyderabad

Humanitarian gesture

The gesture by Dr Rekha Krishna, who recited the Islamic prayer for a dying Muslim patient, is a truly humanitarian one. She provided solace to the patient, going beyond her call of duty as a doctor.

S Lakshmi, email

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
Chairman of the Board: **Manoj Kumar Sonthalia** Editor: **G S Vasu**
Resident Editor (Karnataka) : **Santwana Bhattacharya*** Published by **R K Jhunjhunwala** on behalf of Express Publications (Madurai) Private Limited, at No. 1, Queen's Road, Bengaluru - 560 001 and printed by him at Express Press, Plot No. 2A, Bommasandra Industrial Area, 4th Phase, Survey No. 46, Part Yarandahalli Village, Jigani Hobli, Anekal Taluk. Bengaluru - 560 099. **Bengaluru.** Vol. 57, No. 122 RNI Reg. No. 3457/1960. Phone: 080-22866893. * Responsible for selection of News under the PRB Act. **Copyright:** Express Publications (Madurai) Private Limited. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any manner, electronic or otherwise, in whole or in part, without prior written permission is prohibited.

TWEETS OF THE DAY

Mahua Moitra @MahuaMoitra
Know what's really stupid? GoI & its Ministers endorsing this strabismic hustler who murders both modern medicine & science

P. Chidambaram @PChidambaram_IN
The Union Health Ministry should put out a daily statement of the number of vaccinations administered district-wise every day

Dr Harsh Vardhan @drharshvardhan
With 21.23 Lakh samples tested for #COVID19 in last 24 hours, India sets a new record of highest ever tests conducted in a single day

Vaccine IPR waiver proposal faces hurdles

Lack of manufacturing infra in many countries to be a challenge in its implementation if cleared by WTO, say experts

PUSHKAR BANAKAR @New Delhi

INDIA and South Africa have floated a joint proposal at the World Trade Organization (WTO) seeking an intellectual property rights (IPR) waiver on Covid vaccines. It was met with resistance initially from western countries but has managed to garner considerable support since US President Joe Biden announced that his administration will back it.

However, the proposal is likely to face challenges when it is taken up for discussion at the WTO as well as in implementation. Experts say its implementation would largely depend on the text of the proposal that is eventually passed.

Pharmaceutical patent lawyer Deepshikha Malhotra said though the proposal has garnered support from many countries, there is a section of the world that is not in support. "The EU, for instance, has also suggested a counter-proposal which may be more effective than the joint India-South Africa proposal. It suggests easing exports and increase supply from manufacturers to developing countries," she said. According to Malhotra, the world is currently not being able to fully utilise the vaccines that are being manufactured. "Almost 90% of developed nations are vaccinated and have stockpiles. When these are not being utilised, what is the rush to ensure waiver of patent or transfer of technology? There is a wide disparity. Several African nations haven't even got a single dose," she said. The pharmaceutical patent lawyer goes on to add that compulsory licensing is a tool that could be used by countries to make sure that vaccines accessible for all. "The TRIPS agreement and individual laws of various countries allow for compulsory licensing. In such a situation, this can be availed and made sure that whatever is being manufactured is being compulsorily delivered to developing countries," she added.

A health worker administers a vaccine to a beneficiary at a school in Patiala | PTI

Another IPR expert and lawyer, who did not wish to be named, said despite the waiver, it would not be binding on companies to share the know-how of manufacturing. Malhotra cited the example of the US portal CTAP to elaborate on the point. "CTAP was created which urged all manufacturers to upload technical aspects of manufacturing on it. Not a single firm has uploaded anything so far. Just because governments are agreeing to it, companies will not share information," she said.

A professor of IPR laws in a reputed private university cited the lack of manufacturing infrastructure in many countries as a hurdle in the implementation of the waiver if cleared by the WTO. "Even if the waiver is passed and there is knowhow present, will infrastructure for boosting manufacturing capacity be set up overnight? India and South Africa have said the waiver would be for three years. It would take longer than that just to build the infrastructure to fully utilize the waiver," he said.

Malhotra believes that regulatory approval would also be a hurdle in the implementation of the waiver. "Even if there are firms which agree to take up manufacturing the vaccine, they will still individually have to go through the regulatory process and that will take some time," she said.

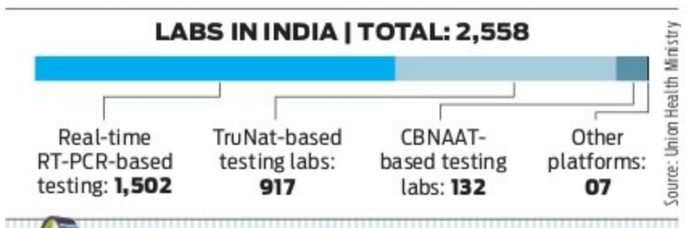
INDIA'S COVID TRACKER

28,05,399
TOTAL ACTIVE CASELOAD IN THE COUNTRY

11.34% is the daily positivity rate

7 states cumulatively account for 66.88% of India's total active cases

21,23,782
TESTS CONDUCTED IN LAST 24 HOURS IN THE COUNTRY, HIGHEST SO FAR


LABS IN INDIA | TOTAL: 2,558
Real-time RT-PCR-based testing: 1,502
TruNat-based testing labs: 917
CBNAAT-based testing labs: 132
Other platforms: 07
Source: Union Health Ministry
15,961 oxygen cylinders
11,516 ventilators/ BiPAP
19 plants oxygen generation
16,630 oxygen concentrators
6.9 lakh Remdesivir vials
All delivered/dispatched expeditiously to states and UTs, says Union Health Ministry

'Cases to dip to pre-2nd wave level by early July'

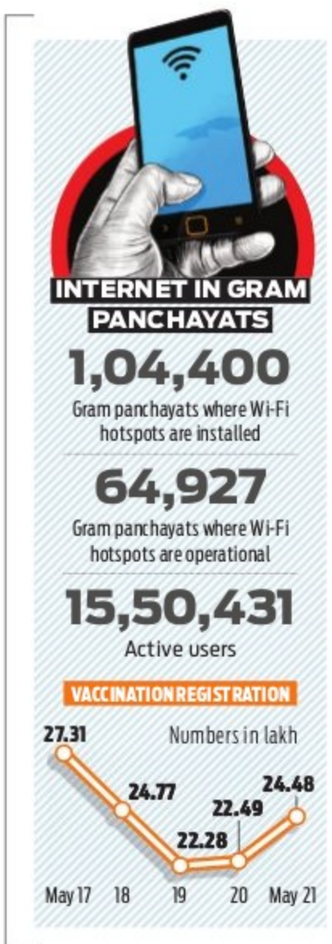
RICHA SHARMA @New Delhi

THE second Covid-19 wave has touched a peak in mid-May and the number of cases is expected to climb down by early July, a mathematical model developed by scientists at IIT indicated.

The virus curve, the model shows, may touch the early February level with around 12,780 new infections (a seven-day average) recorded from around July 3. On Sunday, India registered 2,40,842 new cases, the lowest since April 17 when 2.34 lakh cases were recorded in a day. India's total active caseload has decreased to 28,05,399 on Sunday, which is a net decline of 1,18,001 in the previous 24 hours.

The Covid-19 cases, which started to rise in February, had breached the 1-lakh mark by April 7. It reached over two lakh daily cases in the next 10 days and three lakh daily case by April 24. New infections (seven-day average) reached a peak on May 8 at 3.9 lakh cases while active infections on May 13 at 37.2 lakh cases. The Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (positive), and Removed Approach (SUTRA) model, authored by IIT Kanpur professor Manindra Agrawal, deputy chief integrated defence staff (Med) Lt Gen Madhuri Kanitkar and IIT Hyderabad Prof Mathukumalli Vidyasagar, shows Covid cases in most high-burden states have now stabilised.

"Tamil Nadu's peak has advanced further thanks to lockdown that brought the contact rate down by more than 20%. West Bengal lockdown also seems to have helped very significantly," Prof Agrawal said. He said the model was data-based and the estimated values of parameters were also purely based on data.



POOR INTERNET CONNECTIVITY HAMPERS RURAL VACCINATION

KUMAR VIKRAM @New Delhi

THE mammoth task of vaccinating rural India against the pandemic has hit multiple roadblocks ranging from poor awareness to lack of internet connectivity. Ironically, the ambitious mission of making Covid vaccines available to rural households is facing a big hurdle in the form of poor execution of another ambitious project of the government; the Bharat Net project which aims to bring internet connectivity even to remote villages.

While poor awareness about vaccination is cited as one of the reasons behind lack of enthusiasm for taking the jabs among villagers, digital illiteracy and lack of access to digital technologies, including smartphone and WiFi or data availability, are playing key roles in keeping the rural people vulnerable to the deadly virus. Mukesh Meena, the village head of Fatehpur in Rajasthan said many residents, particularly elderly people, are not aware of the benefits of vaccination. "They are not interested in getting the jabs as they don't know the benefits," he said. However, the bigger problem seems to be the cumbersome registration process. "Only a few families have smartphones and they got the vaccine. But others are in need of help," he said, adding that there is no Wi-Fi hotspot in the village.

Only 1.04 lakh out of the targeted 2.5 lakh panchayats in the country have Wi-Fi hotspots installed under the Bharat Net project. However, just around 65,000 of these hotspots are operational. According to data from the Union IT and Communication Ministry, there are only 15.5 lakh active users of Wi-Fi and FTTH (fibre to the home) in nearly 65,000 panchayats where hotspots are operational. While defending its stand to have online registration for vaccinations, the Centre recently submitted before the Supreme Court that citizens who have no access to CoWIN app, can get assistance from Common Service Centres established by panchayats.

For Prem Kishore, sarpanch of Barhpura Mazra, Moradabad (UP), it not just the connectivity that concerns him. "The situation is very bad here. There is hardly any testing. Many people are down with fever but officials say it is typhoid," he said. "Vaccine registration is not happening properly as we don't have any Wi-Fi hotspots," he added.

Ram Karan, head of Maheri village in Rai Bareli district, said a hotspot was installed in the village long ago. "It is not working now," he said with a pinch of sadness. Similar views were echoed by village representatives from several states including UP, Bihar, MP and Rajasthan.

Under fire, Ramdev withdraws statement

NEW DELHI: Yoga guru Ramdev on Sunday withdrew his statements on allopathic medicine that triggered a row among the medical fraternity, the IMA seeking legal action against the Patanjali Ayurved head.

Responding to a letter from Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, Ramdev said he wants to put the matter to rest. "Hon'ble Minister, I have received your letter. I withdraw my statement, putting to rest the controversy over various medical practices...," he tweeted in Hindi.

Hon'ble Minister, I have received your letter. I withdraw my statement, putting to rest the row over various medical practices
RAMDEV, yoga guru

Earlier on Sunday, a day after the Indian Medical Association (IMA) sent a legal notice to Ramdev for allegedly making "unlearned" statements against allopathy doctors, Vardhan asked the yoga guru to withdraw his remarks while dubbing them as "offensive" and "extremely unfortunate".

A video had recently gone viral in which Ramdev is seen claiming that "allopathy is a stupid science" and medicines such as remdesivir, faviflu, and other drugs approved by the Drugs Controller General of India have failed to treat Covid-19 patients. "The statement disrespects the corona warriors and hurts the sentiments of the country," wrote the minister in a letter addressed to the yoga guru. Your statement can break the morale of healthcare workers and weaken our fight against Covid-19," Vardhan said, adding that allopathic medicines have saved lives of crores and the remark that they are responsible for the death of lakhs is "extremely unfortunate".

Earlier, refuting the allegations, Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust had said Ramdev has the utmost regard for doctors and he bears no ill will against modern science. *ENS*

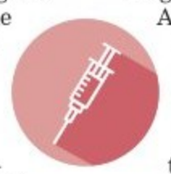
Reduced vax efficacy: Experts call for policy revisit

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @New Delhi

THE latest study indicating that the existing Covid-19 vaccines may have reduced efficacy against the B.1.617 variant of SARS CoV-2 has prompted many experts to urge the Centre to rethink its vaccination policy using fresh modelling and serosurveys.

The B.1.617 variant of Covid-19 is largely responsible for the ferocious second wave of the pandemic in India and has reached many countries, including the UK. The Indian government had recently decided to raise the gap between two doses of Covishield vaccine — to 12-16 weeks from the earlier suggested interval of 6-8 weeks. Though the government insisted that it was being done at the behest of technical input from the expert panel on vaccinations, many believe that this was mainly done due to the acute shortage of Covid-19 vaccines in India.

The new data from the UK, as per a study carried out by Public Health England, suggests that the two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine offer just 60% efficacy against the infection, while the protection after only one dose is much lower. This vaccine, however, has 66% efficacy after both doses against the B.1.1.7 variant, first detected in the UK, and even higher efficacy against the variants which were circulating earlier. The same study showed that the Pfizer, also being used in the UK, was 88% effective against the B.1.617 variant, while its efficacy is over 93% against the B.1.1.7 variant. This concern that the available vaccines may not be working as effectively against the B.1.617 variant, first detected in India, had earlier led to lowering of the gap between two doses of AstraZeneca to 8 weeks, from the earlier interval of 12 weeks in the UK.



Sources in the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 told this newspaper that they were studying the new data while pointing out that lab studies from India have confirmed that both Covishield and Covaxin, the two major vaccines being used in the country, offer protection against various variants. Some experts, however, emphasised the need of revisiting the country's vaccination policy in the light of new data.

According to vaccinologist Gagandeep Kang, if two exposures to parts of SARS-CoV-2 are needed to protect someone from infection, either two doses of vaccine — and even 3 in case of a vaccine based on inactivated virus such as Covaxin — or in those already with confirmed infection, one or two doses of vaccine may be required. "Modelling and serosurveys are urgently needed to optimise strategy for India in the view of the limited supply (of Covid vaccines)," she said.

Virologist Sudhanshu Vrati, while maintaining that the lower efficacy means reduced protection between two doses of a vaccine, said any decision will have to be taken keeping in mind the vaccine scarcity.

EXPRESS READ

4 junior doctors on way to meet UP CM detained

LUCKNOW: Four junior doctors from Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College, Jhansi, were reportedly detailed for at least five hours while they were on their way to meet UP CM Yogi Adityanath. The junior doctors had gone to meet the CM with their grievances and a memorandum of issues faced by them. But they reportedly ended up getting detained.

'Vaccine Express' on track to ramp up drive in rural Bihar

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @Patna

WITH rural areas reporting a lion's share of Covid-19 cases, the Bihar government has decided to roll out mobile vaccination vans, or 'Vaccine Express', from May 25 to inoculate people above 45 years free of charge.

A total of 700 such vans, with a target of administering nearly 1.40 lakh vaccine doses per day, will cover 45,103 villages under 8,406 panchayats in 38 districts over the next few months under the initiative.

"If the daily target of administering 1.40 lakh jabs can be done without any interruption, approximately 42 lakh doses will be administered to the rural populace within a month, and the entire rural population can be vaccinated in next few months," a senior health official said Sunday.

An estimated 5.29 crore people in the 45-59 age group and around 1.07 crore people above 60 years will be inoculated through the Vaccine Express. Under the programme, health workers deputed with each van will first make spot registrations and then vaccinate villagers. The state government has also directed civil surgeons of all districts to ensure the Vaccine Express vans can run from May 25 in interiors areas without hindrances.

Currently, about 76 per cent of the total Covid-19 cases are being reported from the rural areas, with Sheohar recording 14.8% average infection rate, followed by Kishanganj (14.7%), Supaul (13%), Madhubani (12%), Madhepura (10.8%), Samastipur and Araria (9.7%), Darbhanga (9.6%), East Champaran (8.9%) and Katihar (7.4%). Prior to the Vaccine Express, mobile RT-PCR testing vans were vaccinating people in rural areas.

'State ranked second in vaccination'
Health Minister Mangal Pandey recently said Bihar has been ranked second in terms of vaccinating more than 10,60,702 people between 18 and 44 age group till May 22

Never forgot that I was a doc: IAS officer on Covid duty

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"OUR report told us that some of the hospitals had a per capita consumption of four cylinders daily, which is now reduced to two. With the same oxygen we are able to treat 200-300 more patients without affecting the treatment quality," said Jakhar. Nilesh Deore and Thiyagrajan are IAS officers in Bihar of the 2011 batch. While Deore is the district magistrate of Saran, Thiyagrajan is his counterpart in Darbhanga. Deore completed MBBS from the Terna Medical College and Hospital in Navi Mumbai.

"I never forgot that I am a doctor. Wherever I come across sick persons on inspection at hospitals and dedicated Covid care centres, I go through their prescription and offer advice," he said, adding doctors often consult him whenever they face confusion.Thiyagrajan completed MBBS in 2008 from the Coimbatore Medical College and later joined the IAS. "My background has helped me in making arrangements. I advise doctors on usage of drugs, steroids and other life-saving medicines," he said.

An Oxygen Express arrives at Amingaon near Guwahati on Sunday | PTI

Anil Kumar, a 2016 batch IPS officer of the UP cadre and currently an additional deputy commissioner with the Kanpur traffic police, was made in-charge of Covid-related work at the Kanpur Police Commissionerate.

He was earlier a doctor at the Jhalawar Medical College in Rajasthan and the Hindu Rao Hospital in New Delhi before hanging up the white coat for the khaki uniform. When the second wave of the pandemic struck, a Covid care centre was opened at the hospital in the police lines. Kumar used to sit at the flu OPD, screening patients along with Kanpur's CMO. "With the help of the Kanpur CMO, Covid testing also started at the same OPD. It helped in early detection of the virus followed by timely home isolation or institutional treatment," said Dr Kumar.

Rajesh Sahay, SP Zonal Intelligence in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, is a 2002 batch state police service officer. He finished MBBS from Bhopal's MGM Medical College and MD (Anaesthesia) from Indore.

Along with another doctor, he is deployed at a Covid care centre with 16 oxygen beds where he treats patients. "No doctor will ever allow the doctor in him to become dormant," said Sahay. He has been living in self-isolation in a room of his residence since April 28, away from his family.

LOCK DOWN AMID LOCKDOWN

The Aligarh lock industry which employs 1.5 lakh skilled and unskilled workers has demanded prompt steps from the Yogi Adityanath government for its "revival" in the face of persistent hardships due to lockdowns

3 ARRESTED FOR SMUGGLING AMBERGIS WORTH ₹7 CRORE IN GUJ

	Max	Min		Max	Min
Ahmedabad	39	27	Mumbai	32	28
Bhopal	39	24	Panaji	31	27
Jaipur	37	27	Patna	36	26
Amritsar	38	22	Lucknow	37	24
Chennai	37	29	Port Blair	28	24
Kolkata	35	27	Imphal	33	21
Srinagar	23	10	Chandigarh	38	23

READY FOR ACTION

After Tauktae, armed forces gear up to face Cyclone Yaas

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@New Delhi

THE Armed Forces have commenced preparations to mitigate the impact of Cyclone Yaas, which is expected to hit the eastern coast of India on Wednesday. The three wings of the military, along with the Coast Guard, have mobilised their personnel and equipment. Response teams have been kept ready at various locations. Efforts are being made to ensure the supply of essential items for Covid-19 treatment will not be disrupted.

The tropical storm, brewing over the east-central Bay of Bengal, is very likely to hit the coasts of Odisha and West Bengal by Wednesday evening as a 'very severe cyclonic storm'. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said on Sunday that Indian Air Force (IAF) has airlifted 950 National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel and 70 tonnes of load from Jamnagar, Varanasi, Patna and Arakonnam to Kolkata, Bhubaneswar and Port Blair in 15 transport aircraft, as of Sunday.

"IAF has kept sixteen transport aircraft and 26 helicopters on standby for immediate deployment. The Indian Navy, fresh from Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and rescue operations on the Western Coast, has moved 10 HADR pallets to Bhubaneswar and Kolkata, while five HADR pallets are ready at Port Blair," said MoD.

Also, eight ships of the Navy's Eastern Command and the Andaman and Nicobar Command have been embarked with relief materials to provide quick relief to people likely to be affected.

Meanwhile, PM Narendra Modi on Sunday called for timely evacuation of those involved in off-shore activities as he chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of states and central government agencies to deal with the situation arising out of the cyclone. He asked officials to work in close coordination with states to ensure the safe evacuation of people from high-risk areas, and to ensure that time duration of outages of power supply are minimum and restored swiftly, a PMO statement said.

The National Disaster Response Force personnel announce cyclone-related alerts in West Bengal's Howrah district on Sunday | PTI

After TMC win, turncoats knock on Didi's door

At least 10 former Trinamool Congress members who defected to the BJP have expressed desire to comeback

PRANAB MONDAL @Kolkata

AFTER the BJP's dismal performance in the West Bengal Assembly elections, at least 10 former Trinamool Congress members, who joined the saffron camp ahead of the polls, have knocked on the doors of the TMC with apologies.

Over the weekend, at least two more former TMC members, who defected to the BJP, wrote to Mamata Banerjee apologising for their "wrong decisions".

According to party sources, since the election results were announced on May 2, at least 10 turncoats, including three former MLAs and one MP have reached out to the party seeking a return. The party, however, Has no given out any indications as to whether or not it will open its doors to them.

On Sunday, Sarala Murmu, a former TMC leader, who joined the BJP upset with the TMC's decision to field her in Habibpur constituency, instead of Maldaha, expressed her desire to return to Mamata's fold. This came within hours of Sonali Guha, another turncoat who was once Mamata's close aide, making a similar appeal.

Sarla Murmu

Sonali Guha

"I committed a mistake and want Didi (Mamata) to pardon me for that. If she accepts me, I will stay with her and work for the party diligently," Sarala said. Similarly, Amal Acharya, a former TMC MLA from Itahar in North Dinajpur, admitted that it was a wrong decision on his part to join the saffron camp. "I was hurt after being denied ticket in this Assembly elections. I joined the BJP. But after the people of West Bengal gave their verdict in favour of the TMC, the BJP started playing the politics of vendetta. They engaged CBI to arrest three TMC MLAs, including two ministers. In protest against this, I decided to quit the BJP and return to my old party," he said.

Sources in the TMC claimed most of the turncoats now feel they are nowhere in Bengal's political arena after the BJP below-par performance in the elections. The turncoats have found themselves sidelined in the BJP, TMC sources alleged.

Trinamool MP launches scathing attack on Guv

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Kolkata

TRINAMOOL Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee on Sunday launched a scathing attack on West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, asking the public to lodge complaints against him with the police. Kalyan accusing the governor of being hand in gloves with the BJP and being involved in a conspiracy to arrest Trinamool Congress MLAs in connection with Narada sting operation case.

Kalyan Banerjee

He also said once Dhankhar's term as governor ends, he can be prosecuted on the basis of the complaints filed by the people and lodged in the same Presidency jail where the TMC MLAs were lodged.

Kalyan also called the constitutional head of the state a "blood sucker" and a butcher of the constituency.

"The governor secured the arrest of our MLAs. The central agency wrote to him seeking permission to prosecute the accused. But, he gave the nod on May 7. If details of governor's call records are made public, his involvement in the arrest will become clear. I request all to lodge complaints against the governor so that once his term end, he can be prosecuted and sent to the same Presidency jail where our leaders were lodged," said Kalyan. "He is the butcher of Constitution," Kalyan said.

Oppn backs agitation call by farmers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

TWELVE opposition parties have extended support to a protest call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) on May 26 to mark six months of protest by farmers demanding the repeal of Centre's three farm laws.

The leaders who have extended support include Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, former PM HD Deve Gowda, NCP supremo Sharad Pawar, West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, TN CM MK Stalin, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren, JKPA Farooq Abdullah, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, CPI general secretary D Raja and CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

"We extend our support to the call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) to observe a countrywide protest day on May 26 marking the completion of six months of the heroic peaceful Kisan struggle," they said in a joint statement.

"Repeal farm laws to protect lakhs of our *annadatas* becoming victims of the pandemic so that they can continue to produce food to feed the people," the statement said. The Opposition leaders further said they demand the legal entitlement to the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of C2+50 per cent as recommended by the Swaminathan Commission. "The Central Government must stop being obdurate and immediately resume talks with the SKM."

Kisans to protest Punjab's Covid response

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Chandigarh

ALLEGING that the Punjab government has failed to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic effectively, the Bhartiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan), the largest farmer's outfit in the state, has announced a three-day dharna in Patiala, the hometown of Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh.

Arguing that the dharna could become a super spreader event, the chief minister has urged the farmer's body to act responsibly and avoid the proposed event. The CM reminded farmers that the state government has supported them in their agitations against the Centre's farm laws. Amarinder said his government has fought hard to prevent Punjab from going the way of other states like Delhi, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, when it comes to managing the pandemic. Any event with mass participation, like the proposed three-day dharna, has the potential to negate the gains made by the state government in tackling Covid-19, the CM said. As such, it would be detrimental to public interest, the CM pointed out.

TNIE IMPACT

Struggling Jharkhand footballer gets job as coach

MUKESH RANJAN @Ranchi

INDIAN football player Sangeeta Soren, who was forced to become a daily wage worker in a brick kiln due to cash crunch, has been appointed as the coach of the Football Day Boarding Centre for Girls, which will be set up by the Jharkhand government in Dhanbad.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) took note of Sangeeta's plight and wrote to both Jharkhand Chief Secretary and All India Football Federation to intervene in her case, after her story was published by the *The New Indian Express* on Saturday

Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Sports and AYUSH Kiren Rijiju also has ensured full support to the 20-year-old Sangeeta. Rijiju tweeted saying, "ensuring a dignified life for athletes is our priority."

Acting on the directions of NCW, Baghmara Block Development Officer (BDO) Sunil Kumar Prajapati visited her house and provided immediate relief in the form of cash assistance and ration. "The Block Development Officer, along with some other officials visited my home today and provided some financial assistance along with ration," she said.

Rural dists lag behind in inoculation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

DESPITE the village population being high in the agriculture-based state, only 11.86% have been inoculated. Amid cries of supply shortage, the number of doses administered in 16 predominantly rural districts is 20.25 lakh.

The worst performing district is Ferozepur, where only 4.51% have got the shots. There are six more districts with less than 10% vaccination: Sangrur (7.9%), Mansa (7.9%), Moga (9.56%), Muktsar (9.62%), Fatehgarh Sahib (9.63%) and Bathinda (9.79%).

There are six urban districts in the state and Punjab's total vaccination percentage of 15.27 shows that like most parts of the country, vaccination has remained a city-centric drive.

It is the same story in Maharashtra. Urban centres such as Mumbai (43.11%), Pune (47.31%) and Nagpur (48.55%) are far ahead in vaccination compared to rural districts such as Gadchiroli (18.65%), Palghar (18.19%) and Hingoli (17.17%). The average vaccination across Maharashtra is 30.81%.

Interestingly, semi-urban districts have performed even better than urban ones. Kolhapur tops the chart with 62.91%. Sangli and Satara follow with 52.58 each.

In Rajasthan, 43.64% of the beneficiaries in the eight mostly urban districts have been vaccinated. But the drive is poor in the 25 rural districts. The figures for Dausa, Pratapgarh and Jalore districts are 16.36%, 17.21% and 17.25%.

There are exceptions though. The rural districts in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Jammu & Kashmir have performed equally well, if not better than urban areas. In Jharkhand, the inoculation percentage in urban districts like Jamshedpur (16.53%), Ranchi (9.29%), Dhanbad (12.38%) and Deoghar (9.24%) is more or less similar in rural districts such as Chatra (10.25%), Gumla (11.36%), Jamtara (11.99%) and Khunti (15.87%).

Among the main reasons for the poor vaccination in rural areas is apprehension, rumours and superstition. The lack of smart phones and access to the internet means the Aarogya Setu app and the CoWin portal are out of the reach of a sizable part of the rural population.

Priority is also a factor. In Madhya Pradesh, the primary focus was on population density. "With low vaccine availability, our priority as decided at the national level is to first vaccinate the densely populated areas, which is bound to include urban and semi-urban areas. This will gradually spread to the village level," said Dr Santosh Shukla, the state's immunisation officer.

On May 19 in Indore district, 17,037 doses were administered in urban zones and 832 in rural zones. This is the pattern in most other states. "Covid-19 has reached rural areas and started infecting a majority of the people. If not checked, the number of deaths due to Covid-19 from Bihar's rural areas will surprise the world," warned Madhusudan Singh, a prominent physician in Bihar.

(With Inputs from Srinagar, Patna, Bhopal, Ranchi, Guwahati and Dehradun)

Wrestler Sushil arrested in Delhi

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

WRESTLER Sushil Kumar, a two-time Olympic medallist, who is an accused in the murder of a 23-year-old wrestler was arrested on Sunday by the Delhi Police. Kumar has been absconding since May 5.

He was arrested along with co-accused Ajay Kumar, a physical education teacher. The duo was produced before a Delhi court, which remanded them to six days of police custody.

Kumar had been on a run since May 5, after a First Information Report (FIR) was registered against him under IPC Sections 302 (murder), abduction (365), 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 308 (culpable homicide), 365 (kidnapping), 325 (causing grievous hurt), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (wrongful restraint) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Model Town Police station, in connection with the murder.

He was arrested from Outer Delhi's Mundka area by the special cell of the Delhi Police, led by Inspectors Shivkumar and Karambir, under the supervision of ACP Attar Singh. According to the police, Kumar had travelled through six states including Uttrakhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Delhi to evade arrest. The two bought 10 sim cards each for communication and threw it after using. "An Olympian and a National wrestler, running wanted for a crime of murder, arrested on World Wrestling Day," DCP Special Cell tweeted.

US pharma giants refuse to do deals with state govts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"ONE of Covid vaccine manufacturers, Moderna, has refused to send direct vaccination to the Punjab government as according to their policy, they only deal with the Government of India and not with any state government or private parties," said a statement issued by Punjab's Information and Public Relations Department on Sunday.

Sources in the Union health ministry said that Pfizer too, with which negotiations are on for its vaccine supply in India, has already indicated that it will engage only with a centralised government agency.

An official conceded that while technically states are now free to procure vaccines from the vaccine makers abroad, it may not lead to greater access to the crucial supply as supplies by most companies are largely pre-booked and most of the companies are interested in dealing with federal governments.

That India is late on table for vaccine procurement internationally is evident from the fact that it is now pleading with companies for vaccines, even though over 90 % of the supplies by top companies are reported to be totally booked for 2021.

Economist R Ramakumar, talking to this newspaper had earlier said that procurement by a centralised agency is particularly helpful to ensure equitable distribution and availability of the vaccines in India.

Home secretary's tenure extended due to Covid

Chandigarh Home Secretary Arun Gupta and Municipal Commissioner KK Yadav will continue in their respective posts till the Appointment Committee of Cabinet decides on their proposals for extension of tenures, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) informed the Chandigarh administration. The administration had sought a three-month extension of tenures for the two officers to ensure continuity in the Covid-19 management efforts. The tenure of Gupta, a Haryana cadre Indian Administrative Service officer on deputation, was to end on May 31, while that of the Punjab cadre IAS officer Yadav was to end on May 23.

CHANDIGARH DIARY

HARPREET BAJWA
Our correspondent in Chandigarh
hsbajwa73@gmail.com

Air quality improves, thanks to lockdown

Chandigarh has seen an improvement in its Air Quality Index (AQI). The city's AQI has gone up to 'good' from 'satisfactory' since May 4 after a partial lockdown was imposed. The AQI for the first three days of the month was in the 'moderate' range. (May 1: 158; May 2: 111 and May 3: 123). Once the partial lockdown went into effect on May 4, the level of PM10 (particulate matter with diameter lower than 10 micrometres) and PM2.5 in the air came down, improving the air quality. On May 13 and 14, the AQI touched 43 and 48 respectively, according to the Chandigarh Pollution Control Committee. An AQI of less than 50 is considered good. The Chandigarh administration has imposed weekend curfew restrictions till May 25. Chandigarh on Sunday registered 360 cases as against 392 on Saturday.

CSIO develops UV light-based disinfection system

The Chandigarh-based Central Scientific Instruments Organization (CSIO) has developed an ultraviolet light-based disinfection system that can be used to clean air conditioning units and ventilation ducts. The UV light deactivates over 99 per cent of viruses, bacteria, fungus and other bio-aerosols. This system can be used in auditoriums, large conference halls, classrooms, malls and other public places. The use of UV light may also help in ameliorating the fungal infections seen among some Covid patients

Hospitals asked to adopt fire-safety measures

The Director-General of Fire Services in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has written to Chandigarh Municipal Corporation asking it to assess fire safety measures being taken at Covid Care Centres and hospitals across the city. Thereafter, the corporation has written to the UT's nodal officer saying it will be the responsibility of the organisations that run these mini Covid-19 Care Centres to ensure that fire safety measures are being followed. The officer has been asked to obtain an undertaking in this regard from the concerned organisations. At present, there are nine such centres in the city. This is being done as there have been instances of Covid patients dying due to fires at treatment centres in various parts of the city.

8,500
rough estimate of people who reached Britain after crossing the English Channel in small boats last year

GLOBAL WEATHER

Beijing	24	12	LC	Los Angeles	28	16	SNY
Colombo	29	26	TDS	Melbourne	19	14	LC
Dhaka	36	28	TDS	Moscow	21	10	LC
Dubai	42	30	SNY	New York	19	14	LC
Houston	25	22	TDS	Singapore	32	27	LC
Istanbul	27	16	LC	Toronto	19	14	LC
London	13	7	LR	Washington	21	15	HR

LR: Light Rain • HR: Heavy Rain • TDS: Thundershower • LC: Light Cloud • SNY: Sunny

Deal with nuke inspectors expired, says Iran official; talks continue

Nation enriching, stockpiling uranium at levels beyond those allowed by 2015 nuclear deal

TEHRAN

IRAN'S hard-line parliament speaker said on Sunday a temporary deal between Tehran and international inspectors to preserve surveillance images taken at nuclear sites had ended, escalating tensions amid diplomatic efforts to save the Islamic Republic's atomic accord with world powers.

As fellow hard-liners demanded Iran delete the images, officials delayed an earlier-planned news conference by the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

That signaled negotiations between the United Nations agency and Tehran will continue through Sunday night.

The last-minute discussions further underscored the narrowing window for the US and others to reach terms with Iran.

The Islamic Republic is already enriching and stockpiling uranium at levels far beyond those allowed by its 2015 nuclear deal.

Additional protocol

Under a confidential agreement called an 'Additional Protocol' with Iran, the International Atomic Energy Agency 'collects and analyzes hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by its sophisticated surveillance cameras,' the agency said in 2017.

Iran's hard-line parliament in December approved a bill that would suspend part of UN inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories did not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions by February. The IAEA struck a three-month deal with Iran in February to have it hold the surveillance images, with Tehran threatening to delete them afterward if no deal had been reached.

That three-month deadline expired Friday under the Gregorian calendar. Under the Persian calendar, however, the three-month deadline comes on Monday.

On Sunday morning during a session of parliament, speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf announced the deal had expired. He said Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all matters of state, supported the decision to see the deal as void.

"After these three months, the International Atomic Energy Agency definitely won't have the right to access the camera footage or transfer them," he said.

Qalibaf, a member of Iran's top Supreme National Security Council, previously preempted another nuclear program announcement in April as well.

Hours later, however, a website called Nournews that's believed to be close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council quoted an anonymous official suggesting Tehran's deal with the IAEA could be extended 'another month."

The nuclear negotiations have been plagued by contradictory, anonymously leaked information coming from Iran. It's likely a sign of the conflict between the administration of the outgoing President Hassan Rouhani, the relatively moderate cleric who clinched the 2015 deal, and the hard-liners now seeking to replace him.

In Vienna, the IAEA had said its Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi would brief journalists Sunday afternoon on Iran. The agency said Sunday night that the briefing would be delayed as consultations between the IAEA and Iran continued.

It wasn't immediately clear if the images from February until Saturday had been deleted. Before Qalibaf's remarks, lawmaker Ali Reza Salimi urged an open session of parliament to ensure Iran's civilian nuclear arm "erased" the images.

The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, the country's civilian atomic agency, did not immediately comment on the decision. *AP*

A crater full of water and sewage remains where a home was destroyed by an airstrike prior to a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel in Beit Hanoun, the northern Gaza strip | AP/PTI

Israeli police escort over 120 Jewish visitors to flashpoint Jerusalem site

JERUSALEM

ISRAELI police on Sunday escorted more than 120 Jewish visitors to a flashpoint holy site in Jerusalem where police actions in recent weeks had ignited protests and violence that triggered war in Gaza, according to the Islamic authority overseeing the site.

The UN humanitarian coordinator meanwhile said hundreds of homes in Gaza had been completely destroyed and many more had been badly damaged in the 11-day war, which was brought to a fragile halt on Friday.

Police cleared young Palestinians out of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and barred entry to Muslims under the age of 45, according to the Islamic Waqf, which oversees the site under Jordanian custodianship.

Muslims who entered were required to leave their IDs with police at the entrance. It said six Palestinians were detained, with four later released. Israeli police denied there was any age restriction and said they arrested five suspects who 'violated the public order.' Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said the site was open for 'regular visits' and that police had secured the area to prevent 'incidents".

The Waqf said on Sunday was the first time Jews had been allowed to visit the site since May 4, a week before the war broke out.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam. It sits on a sprawling hilltop in Jerusalem's Old City that is revered by Jews as their holiest site because it was the location of the biblical temples. The site has often been the scene of Israeli-Palestinian violence over the years and was the epicenter of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising. *AP*

THE 11-DAY WAR

The Gaza war saw Israel unleash hundreds of airstrikes across Gaza at what it said were militant targets. Hamas and other armed groups fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel, most of which were intercepted or landed in open areas. More than 250 people were killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians. The Israeli strikes levelled a number of large buildings in the impoverished coastal territory, which is home to more than two million Palestinians.

CLEAN-UP BEGINS

On Sunday, hundreds of municipal workers and volunteers started a one-week campaign to clear rubble from Gaza's streets. The work began outside a highrise that was flattened by Israeli warplanes during the early days of airstrikes on Gaza, with workers loading rubble into donkey carts and small pickup trucks.

EXPRESS READ

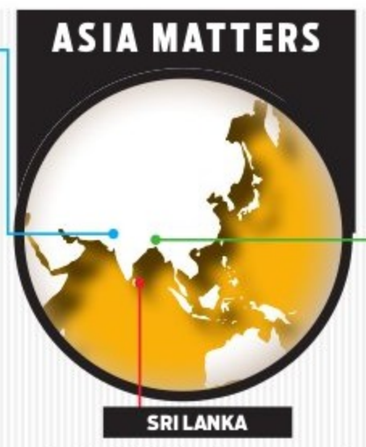
Italian cable car plunges to the ground, 13 dead

Rome: A cable car taking visitors to a mountaintop view of some of Italy's most picturesque lakes plunged to the ground on Sunday, killing at least 13people and sending two children to hospital, authorities said. Stesa Mayor Marcella Severino said it appeared that a cable broke, sending the car careening until it hit a pilon and then fell to the ground. Some of those who died were thrown from the cabin. *AP*

Five killed as car rams into crowd in China

Beijing: A man rammed his car into a crowd in China's Liaoning province, killing at least five persons in an act of revenge on society after an investment failure, police officials said on Sunday. Four persons died at the scene and another was confirmed dead in hospital. Five others, who were injured, are receiving being treated in a hospital, the Xinhua news agency reported. *PTI*

ASIA MATTERS



PAKISTAN

Soldier killed in firefight with Afghan militants

Islamabad: Militants in Afghanistan fired across the border at a military post in northwestern Pakistan, killing a soldier in a firefight with Pakistani troops, the military said. The cross-border attack took place in the district of North Waziristan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province late Saturday night, the military said in a statement. It said troops returned fire and a young soldier was killed. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack and the military provided no further details. The statement said Pakistan has consistently asked Afghanistan to manage and control its side of the border. Afghan Defence Ministry deputy spokesman Fawad Aman said there was no 'center of terrorism in Afghanistan" and that almost all militant groups fighting in Afghanistan have bases in Pakistan. *AP*

Parl's CCTV footage scanned after Oppn leader tests positive

Colombo: Sri Lankan Parliament's CCTV footage is being scanned to trace those came in contact with Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa during a debate in the assembly after he tested positive for the coronavirus. Parliament's Sergeant-at-Arms Naren Fernando said Premadasa's movements within the assembly will be closely observed and contacts would be advised to observe quarantine procedures. Premadasa's and his wife Jalani has also tested positive for virus. *PTI*

BANGLADESH

Decades-long ban on travel to Israel lifted

Dhaka/Jerusalem: Bangladesh has announced to lift a decades-long travel ban to Israel, a move welcomed by the Jewish state. Bangladeshi passports earlier had a clause written on them that said "This passport is valid for all countries of the world except Israel", but the government on Saturday decided to remove "except Israel" from the document. Israel welcomed the decision. "Great news! #Bangladesh has removed the travel ban to Israel. This is a welcome step & I call on the Bangladeshi government to move forward and establish diplomatic ties with #Israel so both our peoples could benefit & prosper," Deputy Director General at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Gilad Cohen tweeted. *PTI*

Nepal's Oppn to file writ petition in SC against House dissolution today

KATHMANDU

NEPAL'S Opposition alliance on Sunday postponed the registration of a writ petition in the Supreme Court and will file it on Monday against the "unconstitutional" dissolution of the House of Representatives by the President. The Opposition parties, which had planned to register the writ on Sunday, put off the procedure until Monday, citing lack of adequate time.

According to a CPN-Maoist Centre leader, the petition will be filed at 10:00 am on Monday, The Himalayan Times reported.

Leaders of the alliance on Sunday were engaged in conducting meetings and collecting signatures of the lawmakers from the Maoist Centre, the Nepali Congress, the Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal, Rastriya Janamorcha and Madhav Nepal faction of the ruling CPN-UML, it said.

Although the signature collection campaign has not ended, more than enough people have signed up to prove a majority, the report quoted a Maoist Centre leader.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives on Saturday for the second time in five months and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19 on the advice of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, heading a minority government.

Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari

She rejected the bids of both embattled Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition alliance's claims to form a government. Oli and Opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba had staked separate claims to the premiership.

The announcement came after Prime Minister Oli in his last deal-sealing move on Friday midnight recommended the Office of the President to dissolve the House and announce dates for early elections.

Alarmed by the President's step to dissolve the House yet again, the leaders of Nepal's Opposition alliance on Saturday decided to take all legal and political means to counter Prime Minister Oli and President Bhandari's "unconstitutional, undemocratic and regressive" move. *PTI*

DIANA INTERVIEW

Shamed BBC journalist apologises

LONDON

MARTIN Bashir, the BBC journalist who tricked princess Diana into giving an explosive interview, on Sunday apologised to Princes William and Harry, but said claims linking his actions to her death were "unreasonable".

A report by retired senior judge John Dyson published on Thursday found that Bashir commissioned faked bank statements that falsely suggested some of Diana's closest aides were being paid by the security services to keep tabs on her. Bashir, 58, then showed them to Diana's brother Charles Spencer in a successful bid to convince him to arrange a meeting between himself and Diana and earn her trust. Bashir told the Sunday Times he was "deeply sorry" to Diana's sons Prince William and Prince Harry.

"I never wanted to harm Diana in any way and I don't believe we did," he told the paper. But William said Bashir's actions and the interview had made "a major contribution" to the demise of his parents' relationship and "contributed significantly to her fear, paranoia and isolation" in her final years. In his own release, Harry said the deceptive practices had played a part in his mother's death. "The ripple effect of a culture of exploitation and unethical practices ultimately took her life," he said.

Diana died in a Paris car crash in 1997, aged 36.

Bashir disputed the accusations, saying "I don't feel I can be held responsible for many of the other things that were going on in her life, and the complex issues surrounding those decisions. "The suggestion I am singularly responsible I think is unreasonable and unfair," he told the paper. *AFP*

Severe weather kills 21 marathon runners in China

BEIJING

TWENTY-ONE ultra-marathon runners were killed in northwest China after high winds and freezing rain struck a 100-kilometre mountain race at the weekend.

Extreme weather hit participants in the race on Saturday in the Yellow River Stone Forest, a tourist site in Gansu province, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Twenty-one people were killed in the tragedy, officials said on Sunday. A total of 172 people participated in the mountain marathon.

The rescue work, which lasted almost 24 hours, was completed on Sunday and the remains of all 21 victims had been transferred from the site of the incident, the rescue headquarters said. Over 1,200 well-equipped rescuers took part in the operation.

Another 151 participants were confirmed safe, of whom eight with minor injuries were treated in hospital and were in stable condition, the Xinhua report said. The public safety incident was caused by a sudden change in local weather. The provincial authorities have set up an investigation team to look further into the cause of the incident, Zhang Xuchen, mayor of Baiyin City told the media.

Rescuers carrying equipment as they search for runners who were competing in a 100-km cross-country mountain race when extreme weather hit the area near the city of Baiyin in China's Gansu province | AFP

"As the organiser of the event, we feel a deep sense of guilt and remorse. We express our deep condolences and sympathies to the bereaved families and the victims," Zhang said. According to the rescue headquarters, at about 1 pm on Saturday, hail, freezing rain and gales hit the area of the race's high-altitude stage, between 20 km and 31 km. Participants suffered from physical discomfort due to the sudden drop in air temperature.

The race was halted when some participants went missing. "At 1 pm on Saturday, the wind got stronger. It was hard to stand up straight and move forward. When the wind was the strongest, I had to grasp the ground with both my hands to avoid being blown over," Xinhua quoted one survivor, who declined to be named, as saying.

"I felt nothing but cold at the time," said the survivor. "I just ran about 30 km and quit the race ahead of the third checkpoint. I fainted halfway down the mountain."

After participants posted videos requesting help in a WeChat group chat, local authorities initiated an emergency response and organised rescue forces to search for the missing people.

The temperature dropped again during the night due to the area's complex terrain and topography, making the search and rescue work more difficult. The tragedy has evoked public anger on Chinese social media, with criticism mainly directed at the Baiyin government for lack of contingency planning. *PTI*

UK to unveil plans for 'digital border', start US-style e-travel authorisation

LONDON

BRITAIN will announce plans for a "fully digital border" including the introduction of US-style electronic travel authorisation to pre-check travellers to the UK, interior minister Priti Patel said Sunday.

She will announce the plans in parliament on Monday as part of a wider overhaul of the country's immigration system, which will also include the introduction of a points-based migration system.

"Our new fully digital border will provide the ability to count people in and out of the country, giving us control over who comes to the UK," Patel said in a statement.

"Our new approach will make it easier to identify potential threats before they reach the border," she added.

Digitising the border will mean officials "can now count who is coming in and out of the country and whether they have permission to be here," said her Home Office department.

Patel unveiled elements of her "New Plan for Immigration" in March, calling it "the most significant overhaul of our asylum system in decades."

Tightening immigration rules and securing borders were key promises of those like Patel and Prime Minister Boris Johnson who argued for leaving the EU in Britain's 2016 Brexit referendum.

Under the new plans to be unveiled on Monday, Patel is set to announce that people coming to the UK without a visa or immigration status will have to apply for an American-style Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA). The Home Office expects that around 30 million ETA applications will be processed each year.

"What I'm unveiling and proposing tomorrow is a new legal migration and border strategy..., which is based upon digitalisation of our borders, but also the simplification of our immigration laws," Patel told Sky News on Sunday.

"I am introducing the new borders bill, which will come to parliament next month, where we will specifically clamp down and tackle the problems around illegal migration," she added.

"We will have not just greater checks, we've already got very, very significant law enforcement operations taking place in France, in Belgium... and we're really prosecuting and arresting the people smugglers." *AFP*

MAKING THE RIGHT INVESTMENT IN THE AGE OF COVID

The current turmoil in the financial markets is led by the investors who know a lot of stuff

RAJAS KELKAR

THE cryptocurrency market is in turmoil. Last week, Bitcoin, Ethereum, Dogecoin and others fell over 15 per cent in value. There are days when billionaire Elon Musk endorses them and then days when he pulls back. A lot of trading in these newest assets is volatile. Investors pulling money out from these assets in panic are perhaps buying equity assets or gold. Last week, equity markets around the world witnessed a sharp jump. Gold prices have gained ground too.

Factors influencing financial markets around the world are not related to interest rates or profits of businesses anymore. They are more about moving money from one asset class to another.

There are two sets of investors. The one set is of those who know a lot of stuff. They have access to the latest information in major world economies and markets. They are on top of market cycles and focus on allocating assets based on informed decisions. Institutional investors and high net worth individuals belong to this category.

The other set of investors are people like you and me. You cannot claim to know much. At the same time, you have access to information, but your preoccupation with work relatively limits your abilities to connect the dots.

The current turmoil in the financial markets is led by investors who know a lot of stuff. They have dabbled across multiple asset classes like bitcoin, and some of them are either taking out profits or looking to diversify their portfolios.

SOUMYADIP SINHA

Diversifying the risk

At every level, diversification of risk matters. You may be an investor with the most risk appetite in the world. You may have access to the latest information and data needed to manage your money. Even then, it is impossible to eliminate risk. You can only minimise it in your lifetime by using your common sense. The age-old saying 'Never put all eggs in one basket' works. It is the best way to protect your wealth.

If that applies to a sophisticated investor, it applies to you too. There would be temptations in your lifetime. The value of Bitcoins jumped to $ 30,000 from a few hundreds in just a few years. However, everyone can't make a fortune and get a multi-bagger instantly. You have to be in the game for a long to seize your opportunity at some stage.

Fixed deposit and other safe assets

Your safe assets include cash in the bank, fixed deposits, money put in public provident fund, Kisan Vikas Patra and other government post office schemes. The government has set up a mechanism to determine the rates offered on these instruments. According to the latest RBI Bulletin, the rates currently offered on these schemes are higher than the formula created based on market-linked interest rates. That means the government bears the difference of up to 1.5%. That is the difference between the administered rate on these schemes and the market rate. Considering that India's economy is expected to underperform and see a decline in tax revenue, the government will likely look at that difference as a burden. These rates could go down, too, if lock-downs are lifted and the economy does not grow at the desired pace. You have to think about diversification from below inflation rate returns.

Equity assets

Your money can only grow in equity assets over the long term. Your investment needs to beat the inflation rate. Systematic Investment Plans into exchange-traded funds or diversified mutual funds are your gateway. The National Pension Scheme or the NPS offers market-linked returns. It would help if you took advantage of the NPS's additional tax benefits and equity-linked returns.

When it comes to equity assets, the motive of businesses is to grow revenue and profits. Share prices follow growth in profits. You have to ensure an adequate allocation to equity assets from your monthly surplus.

If you were looking for a suitable time to start, you could meet a financial advisor immediately. There is no right or wrong time to get started with long-term investing. If too much allocation to equity assets is risky, so is inadequate ownership of equity assets.

(The author is editor-in-chief at www.moneyminute.in)

Caught in the Bitcoin fad? Experts advise caution

BISMAH MALIK @ Bengaluru

BITCOIN may be the latest asset you can't wait to get your hands on, considering it has rallied 400 per cent in the last year, but experts counsel prospective investors to exercise caution and consider the old school way of investment: Don't put all your eggs in the same basket.

In India, the user base of crypto traders has grown 2-3-fold since the onset of the pandemic, with exchanges claiming to have added millions of monthly active users on their platforms. Surprisingly, since January 2021, it hasn't been just the the millennial group but also people above 45 years of age who have shown keen interest in digital assets, especially after the Supreme Court of India overturned the RBI ban on cryptocurrencies last year.

As for Bitcoin, analysts at JP Morgan wrote in a note on Wednesday that institutional investors are ditching Bitcoin for gold in a "dramatic change of fund flows". This was after the most valued digital token fell by almost 30 per cent to touch $30,681 in just a week. However, within the next 24 hours, the price had again stabilized at around $42,274. In April, Bitcoin had touched an all-time high of $64,863.

"The bitcoin flow picture continues to deteriorate and is pointing to continued retrenchment by institutional investors. Over the past month, bitcoin futures markets experienced their steepest and more sustained liquidation since the bitcoin ascent started last October. Institutions are unwinding Bitcoin futures and building up long positions in gold futures. And bitcoin funds are also seeing a steady deterioration, with four-week flow turning negative for the first time," JP Morgan wrote.

Analysts pointed out that at the same time, cash has been heading to gold ETFs, reversing the pattern of Q4 2020 and the start of this year. The reason, JP Morgan says, could be to seek stability in assets like traditional gold.

A top executive at a wealth tech firm based in Bengaluru agreed that the volatility in the Bitcoin and Ethereum price over the past week will make a lot of investors re-think investments in digital assets in the long-term. "We saw exchanges crashing this week, because people were buying dips, there was panic selling which started with the Tesla CEOs tweets and then China central bank's ban. At the moment, social media is largely driving the prices of digital assets, leading to so much volatility. The queries for investment advice on crypto have grown manifold, but we do maintain that this is a high-risk asset and the best strategy would be to include Bitcoin in a small portion of your portfolio, in addition to MFs, gold, real estate, etc. Getting caught in the crypto fad is something investors should be wary of, since those who sold their tokens last week lost 100 per cent of their investment capital," the senior executive said.

In India, the regulatory uncertainty on virtual currency is also a matter of concern, since SEBI hasn't yet outlined the trading regulations for these assets—especially making key classifications of cryptocurrencies as investment products, securities, or commodities. The RBI's tough stance doesn't help either.

While amateur investors remain a confused lot, more seasoned ones observe that the digital assets are here to stay. Bengaluru-based networking engineer and a long term crypto investor, Fouad Farooq, said that from an investor's perspective, the higher the volatility, the higher the risk, and eventually, the higher will be the profit/loss. "There will always be crashes and sudden gains, but one needs to see it holistically. Bitcoin is up multiple times compared to what it was a year back. Ethereum, Ripple and multiple currencies are on the rise. Banks do realize the power of cryptocurrency but are working under the influence of the regulators to block usage of crypto. The crypto exchanges have realized this and have moved their operations outside India. But crypto is here to stay. These are just minor hiccups on the way," he claimed.

Nischal Shetty, CEO and founder of India's largest crypto exchange, WazirX, said that investors shouldn't buy everything in one day and should ideally monitor the price transition closely. "Investors need to distribute their buying, and closely follow market movement for at least the next one week," he noted.

A policy paper 'The Path Forward for Digital Assets Adoption in India' by Ripple suggests that the country should adopt digital asset taxonomy consistent with global practice by providing clarity to the legal character of digital assets and empowering SEBI to license, regulate, and supervise digital asset service providers.

"Now is the time for Indian policymakers to take the forward-looking approach that many other jurisdictions in Asia, such as Singapore and Japan, have taken. Responsible usage of blockchain technology and digital assets can introduce tremendous potential to the Indian economy," said Navin Gupta, MD, South Asia & MENA, Ripple.

Bitcoin price movement since January 2020

Period	BTC Price	Percentage change (Drop/Increase)
Jan-March 2020	$6451	-30%
January 2021	$34482.7	434%
April 2021	$64,863	88%
May 19 2021	$30,681	-52%
May 20 2021	$42,274	37%
May 22 2021	$38,142	-9%

INDIA: CRYPTO SNAPSHOT

10 million	$1 billion	$300+	$350-500 m
Cryptocurrency holders	Total asset holding	Startups dealing with crypto	Daily trading volume

MONEY-WISE

PREPARING FOR A COVID ATTACK ON YOUR FAMILY

WHAT separates Covid from other killers like Cancer is that it spreads. If there was an earthquake you could rush help to that place—clothes, food, cash, etc. When one family member is hit by cancer it is sad, but you do not have to worry about cancer impacting others. Covid/ Corona/ whatever name you want to give it, is different. So, what do you need to do?

- Make a will. Anybody who has Real Estate holdings in their name has to make a will. Even if you are a joint holder, it is necessary to make a will. Make sure that your name is the same across all the documents that you have—Pan, Aadhar, bank account, mutual funds, and all other assets and liabilities.
- Make sure that your Pan and Aadhar are in sync. After a person dies, you will realize that a Vishwanath and a Vishvanath are different in law. If your name is Rajesh Vinod Patel, make sure that it is the same in every document—Rajesh V Patel is different for the lawyers. The name is a bigger problem for women. Iif you have changed your name after your marriage, please ensure that it is incorporated in all the official documents. Check the spelling too!
- All investments should be in 'Either or Survivor' mode, with both your children as nominees. I would never have said this but for the Covid deaths where more than one family member dies. Deaths are bad, the gap between is more cruel.
- Most of us do not nominate bank accounts too. 'When it is a 2-person holding, why bother?' Wrong. Covid has made us take a relook at this too.
- Your children over 14 should be involved in all the documentation. Do the documentation, and explain to them what you are doing and why you are doing it. They may suddenly have to become men/women and handle the 'grown-up' situation. No, it is not easy, but at least they will feel better prepared if you go ahead and brief them.
- Check your Term Life Insurance and Medical insurance. The first thought that comes to a person when they are hit by an illness is "I wish I had more life/medical Insurance". So go and check your Medical and Term-Life insurance. Take a little extra if you feel like it. Paying a couple of thousand rupees will not kill you. Once the pandemic is over, THROW it away if you think so. I keep saying "No widow ever told me that her husband was over-insured". All of us like the claims received, but we hate paying the premium.
- Involve your lawyer, Chartered Accountant, sibling, and own children, especially if they are under 20 years of age. However, it is your call. There is no "one right answer" here.
- Sit with your family and explain all the investments—why, where, value, the name of the agent, when to sell, how to sell (redeem). I would do it this way. If the husband looks after all the investments, he should explain it to his wife. The wife should explain the nuances to the kids, in the presence of the husband. This is the best way to ensure that all of them are in the same boat.

Like they say, there are a lot of things to be done, but let us make a decent start with these 8 points?

FINANCIAL ADVICE

PV SUBRAMANYAM

writes at www.subramoney.com and has authored the best seller 'Retire Rich - Invest ₹ 40 a day'

Markets likely to add to gains, take cues from Q4 earnings, Covid cases

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

AFTER having made significant gains during the previous week, India's equity markets may add on to these gains in the next few sessions if they continue to be supported by positive cues.

"Looking at the broad based participation on Friday, especially the way the banking space is poised; we will not be surprised to head towards a record high in the first half of the forthcoming week. In fact, if all the other factors (continue to) support, we may see new highs also in the coming sessions," said Sameet Chavan, Chief Analyst-Technical and Derivatives, Angel Broking

Last week, the BSE Sensex made a weekly gain of 1,807.93 points, or 3.71 per cent, to close at 50,540.48 points, while the broader Nifty50 rallied 497.50 points, or 3.39 per cent, to settle at 15,175.30, the index's highest level since March 3, 2021.

Falling Covid-19 case counts, favourable global cues, and strong corporate earnings for March quarter have all played a role lifting market sentiment. And according to analysts, all these factors are likely to persist and dominate India's equity market in the near future. The week many also witness a little volatility given the expiry of May derivative contracts.

"Participants will be closely eyeing the Covid-related updates as the reduction in the cases has raised hopes of a gradual unlocking by the states. We feel our markets can outperform the global peers in the near future, tracking the favourable developments on the local front." pointed out Ajit Mishra, VP-Research at Religare Broking.

Meanwhile, Shrikant Chouhan, Executive Vice President, Equity Technical Research at Kotak Securities said that the NSE Nifty was on the way to crossing the 15,450 mark in the next few days, or a few weeks. Above the level of 15,450, it will likely be arrested at 15600/15650, he said.

"The strategy should be to buy on dips. The support for the market exists at 15,050 and at 14,900. The focus for the coming week should be on medium-sized banks, real estate and infrastructure stocks. FIIS sold ₹2,300 crore during the week, however, things should change as the dollar index starts trading comfortably below the 90 level," he said.

Company results will also play a role in guiding sentiment. Grasim Industries, BPCL, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries and Central Bank of India are among the few major companies scheduled to announce their quarterly earnings this week. The movement of the rupee, and foreign investment will also be factors.

Gold saving funds see ₹864-crore inflow in April

Gold saving funds and gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) witnessed net inflows of ` 864 crore in April amid uncertain economic environment in the wake of the second wave of COVID-19. The positive inflow is expected to continue in the financial year 2021-22 as the precious metal remains an under allocated asset in investor portfolios in these uncertain times, news agency PTI quoted Chirag Mehta, Senior fund manager-Alternative Investments at Quantum Mutual Fund, as saying

EXPRESS READ

Jaypee creditors' panel to discuss NBCC offer

New Delhi: The creditors' panel of Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL) will meet on Monday morning to discuss submissions made by state-owned NBCC, a move that has been strongly objected to by Suraksha group that also warned of legal recourse in case voting on its offer does not materialise as scheduled. The sudden meeting of the Committee of Creditors (CoC) was decided upon after NBCC shot off a strongly-worded letter to the Interim Resolution Professional.

Birlas bets big on realty, lines up ₹1,000-cr capex

New Delhi: Century Textiles & Industries, which runs three business verticals—paper & pulp, realty and paper tissues, and nets over 70 per cent of the income from the first—is diverting its focus onto the real estate business and has lined up `1,000 crore for capex this fiscal for its ongoing and upcoming projects, including the super premium Worli project, PTI reported. 'We've set aside `1,000 crore in capex for Birla Estate this fiscal," MD JC Laddha said.

Bank of Baroda sets new rules for large cheque transactions effective June 1

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

BANK of Baroda has informed customers of new cheque processing rules that will come into effect from June 1, 2021. The new system will require customers to mandatorily make 'Positive Pay Confirmation' in order to prevent incidents of fraud during cheque transactions. These rules will only apply for transactions worth more than ₹2 lakh.

The Positive Pay confirmation process invovles reconfirming key details of high value cheques. The issuer of the cheque is required to submit electronically relevant details related to the cheque, such as cheque number, date, payee name, account number, amount, and other such details.

"Customers are requested to provide us advance intimation of cheques issued to the beneficiaries so that Bank at the time of presentment in CTS clearing can pass the High-Value cheques without contacting to the customers," the bank says on its website.

The new rules say that a cheque of ₹50,000 and above can be confirmed. But there is no option for Modification or deletion of a registered confirmation in any mode. However, customers can stop the payment at any point of time before its presentment in CTS clearing or at the counter. The cheque will be passed only if provided key details matches with the actual cheque.

TODAY'S STOCK PICK

Current Price ₹549.15

Target Price ₹615

GODREJ AGROVET

Strong 4QFY21 performance was aided by all segments and low base of 4QFY20. EBITDA margin expanded 440bp YoY due to lower raw material costs (-340bp YoY), which led to an EBITDA growth of 133%. All segments reported a margin expansion.

—Motilal Oswal Financial Services

Disclaimer: The views and recommendations made above are that of the individual analyst or broking company, and not that of *TNIE*.

Leclerc claims pole for Monaco Grand Prix

Charles Leclerc will start on pole for his home Monaco Grand Prix after setting the fastest time in qualifying Saturday despite ending the session with suspension damage to his Ferrari. Red Bull's Max Verstappen will begin alongside him on the front row of Formula One's iconic street race with Lewis Hamilton on the fourth row of Sunday's grid.

BRUISED & BATTERED

The extraordinary Sushil Kumar story grew thicker following his arrest on World Wrestling Day. **Indraneel Das** recounts his career as the aura of invincibility comes crashing down and threatens to shatter his legacy

THE legend may live on but Sushil Kumar's legacy may not. The phantom of guilt will always pursue him to the end, whether convicted or not. The invisible, cruel hands of destiny have caught up with Sushil – a sporting icon who gave millions belief and reasons to dream – with a formidable grip, literally and metaphorically. His work on the wrestling mat was a living testimony of hard work, tenacity and a hint of mischief too in pursuit of glory. His story had all the ingredients of a shining and a rising India. A medallist at the Olympics in 2008 and 2012, he has no equals in Indian sport.

That veneer of invincibility came crashing down on May 5, when an alleged murder in Sushil's natural habitat — the Chhatrasal stadium — led the cops to start a manhunt. On Sunday morning, a video clip of two cops parading Sushil after apprehending him was poignant. That image will linger in the mind for eternity.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar (centre) is arrested and taken into custody by police officers in New Delhi on Sunday | PARVEEN NEGI

****

He had been absconding since May 5 after a brawl that resulted in the death of former national wrestling champion, Sagar Dhankar. Of course, beyond allegations and counter allegations, there is nothing as of now. The police are investigating, let it end. Yet, the allegations are damaging. An off the field drama threatening to tarnish his unprecedented legacy.

On the mat, Sushil was no fluke. When Indian wrestlers' ambition was limited to dreaming about an Olympic medal, he shattered that glass ceiling by winning one, a bronze, at Beijing in 2008. To remind the world that it was not by accident but design, he won his second at the London Olympics, a silver. He ruled the world championships with disdain. Merciless on the mat but he came across as one of the most docile down to earth characters off it.

****

Sushil, a Hanuman bhakt, believes in tapasya. In 2010, after he returned from the world championships in Moscow with gold, he went to meet the sports minister, attended a couple of felicitation programme and went back to practice. In the evening he was at the Chhatrasal Stadium, practicing. Leading a simple life of a hermit, he pursued excellence. "If you work hard for something sincerely, everything else will follow," was his doctrine. A firm believer in karma and destiny, Sushil always felt there was no substitute for hard work and sincerity. He was modest. He was happy in his small cooler-cooled room in Sonepat (he got a single room after winning the Olympic medal) where the national camp used to be held.

After 2012, things took a different turn. Weight categories at the Olympics were tweaked. He had to move from 66kg to 74kg. Since then, his medals including gold had been at the Commonwealth Games (Glasgow in 2014 and Gold Coast 2018) and a few commonwealth championships (2017 was the last). His career was punctuated by controversies too. Injuries were a constant company by then.

In 2016, the big controversy was the Narsingh Yadav-Sushil one. Narsingh had won an Olympic berth winning bronze at the world championships in 2015 but Sushil felt he should be called for trials to ascertain who should represent India at the 2016 Rio Olympics. Like a soap opera or a low-grade crime thriller, the tussle turned into a mystery. Narsingh tested positive for doping and had to miss the Rio Olympics because he was forced to serve a four-year ban after a CAS hearing at Rio. Narsingh blamed Sushil for mixing a substance in his drink while he was not his room. The allegation remained an allegation as Sushil was cleared of all charges.During the nationals in 2017, his larger than life image stared starkly across the sport. He won without a fight. Parveen and Sachin Rathi gave walkovers before the final. In the gold medal round too, Parveen Rana did not turn up citing injury.

Months before lockdown last year, I went to meet Sushil in what he calls his 'sacred space': Chhattrasal Stadium. It was the basement parking where he had laid out two mats and built a new gymnasium. The dark, dimly-lit entrance led to his practice hall.

There was an air of invincibility around him as he was preparing for the now-postponed Tokyo Olympics. It was visible. But he was a shadow of who he was in 2012. At 36, the strength was fading. His knees were strapped. An occasional grimace of pain was painted on his face. He knew it but refused to acknowledge it. The parking lot below the sprawling Chhattrasal complex was an anti-thesis – dark and dingy. It's where the 'pehalwanji' trained. However, he still lived for the sport.

****

The art is still living. The artist, however, will be painted with a different brush. Whether we should marvel at the art – the creation of the artist – or loathe the artist will depend on how we see the whole story. One thing, though. It's ironic that Sushil, according to the police, is alleged to have had a role in the killing in a space he considers 'sacred'

"Life," in the words of Albert Camus, an existentialist writer and Nobel laureate, "is a sum of your choices."

Full story: newindianexpress.com

ACHIEVEMENTS

Sushil, the most decorated Indian wrestler, won country's first Olympic medal in wrestling after 56 years when he bagged 66kg bronze in the **2008 Beijing Olympics**. KD Jadhav won the first (bronze) in **1952 Games.**

Two years later, he became the only Indian wrestler to clinch World Championships gold in Moscow defeating opponent from the host country.

The freestyle wrestler then became the only Indian to pocket two Olympic medals when he won 66kg silver in the **2012 London Olympics**.

The Najafgarh grappler also won three consecutive gold in Commonwealth Games **(2010, 2014 and 2018)** with the first being in 66kg while the remaining two in 74kg.

CONTROVERSY

Before landing in trouble for his alleged involvement in murder of a young wrestler, Sushil was involved in a dispute with Wrestling Federation of India over selection of Narsingh Yadav for the **2016 Rio Games**. Sushil demanded trials and moved the Delhi High Court. Yadav eventually failed the dope test and claimed he was victim of conspiracy and even filed an FIR claiming his food was spike. In the 2018, he was mired in yet another controversy during the selection trials for the **2018 CWG**. After the bout, his opponent Parveen Rana claimed he and his brother were assaulted by Sushil's supporters.

Striker Sergio Aguero (right) celebrates his second goal against Everton on Sunday in his final Premier League game for Manchester City | AFP

Liverpool, Chelsea pip Leicester for CL spots

AFP @ London

LIVERPOOL and Chelsea seized the final two Champions League places in a dramatic end to the Premier League season on Sunday, leaving Leicester heartbroken for the second consecutive campaign.

With Manchester City already guaranteed a third title in four years and Manchester United certain to finish second, the focus was on the battle for the final two places in the top four.

Heading into the 38th and last round of fixtures, just one point separated Chelsea in third place from Leicester in fifth.

Two Sadio Mane goals gave Liverpool a 2-0 win at home to Crystal Palace while Thomas Tuchel's side were indebted to a late Leicester collapse against Tottenham at the King Power Stadium.

Chelsea lost 2-1 at Aston Villa but were saved by the 4-2 defeat for Brendan Rodgers' FA Cup winners.

Jamie Vardy ramped up the pressure on deposed champions Liverpool and Chelsea early on a see-saw afternoon, putting Leicester ahead from the penalty spot.

That meant, as it stood, Liverpool, playing in front of the biggest crowd at Anfield since they became English champions least season, dropped out of the Champions League qualification places. But after an uncertain start, Mane calmed nerves in the 36th minute and minutes later Harry Kane, possibly playing his final game for Spurs, levelled for the visitors at the King Power.

STANDINGS (TOP 5)

CLUB	M	W	D	L	PTS
MAN CITY	38	27	5	6	86
MAN UNITED	38	21	11	6	74
LIVERPOOL	38	20	9	9	69
CHELSEA	38	19	10	9	67
LEICESTER	38	20	6	12	66

RESULTS: Arsenal 2 bt Brighton 0, Aston Villa 2 bt Chelsea 1, Fulham 0 lost to Newcastle 2, Leeds 3 bt West Brom 1, Leicester 2 lost to Tottenham 4, Liverpool 2 bt Crystal Palace 0, Manchester City 5 bt Everton 0, Sheffield United 1 bt Burnley 0, West Ham 3 bt Southampton 0 , Wolves 1 lost to Manchester United 2.

EXPRESS READ

Verstappen wins Monaco Grand Prix

MONACO: Max Verstappen capitalised on Ferrari pole-sitter Charles Leclerc's cruel last-minute withdrawal to win Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix and go top of the drivers' world championship for the first time.Carlos Sainz for Ferrari took second with Lando Norris for McLaren completing the podium.

2021 Asia Cup postponed to 2023

NEW DELHI: The 2021 edition of the Asia Cup will now be held in 2023 due to a lack of window in a rejigged cricket calendar that is constantly subject to change amid an evolving Covid situation. This year's tournament was moved from Pakistan to Lanka but rising cases in the island nation had led to its cancellation.

Tough draw for Indian boxers in Asian meet

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

What seemed unimaginable a few days ago, is a reality now for Indian elite boxers as they are set to step inside the ring during the Asian Championships, which kicks off from Monday.

The tournament itself had been postponed last year and had also been shifted from Delhi to Dubai due to the ongoing pandemic situation in India. Until the time they landed in Dubai, the Indian pugilists' journey has been a tricky one to say the very least. Amid pandemic, this event will be a huge test of strength, both mental and physical, for everyone ahead of the Tokyo Olympics. The official draw on Sunday finally marked the end of recent troubles and now, they can finally focus on boxing.

Amit Panghal (52 kg), gold medallist in the last edition, has been named the top seed but as expected, he'll be facing tough rivals who'll be looking to snatch that top prize away from him. In the opener, he'll either face Sultan Alnuaimi of UAE or Kharkhuu Enkhmandakh of Mongolia. If he wins his first fight, he could meet the third seed Saken Bibossinov in the semifinals.

Chess coaches make seamless transition to online training

VIVEK KRISHNAN @ Chennai

SOMETIME in February last year, Grandmaster Vishnu Prasanna took the call to open his own chess academy to facilitate the training of talented youngsters. He began searching for a space in Chennai where he could set up the coaching centre, but it was taking time for the 31-year-old to find a suitable space. A month later, of course, Covid-19 began making its presence felt in India and a nationwide lockdown duly came into force, putting Vishnu's plans firmly on hold.

Eventually, Vishnu decided in August last year to open an online chess academy. The decision was logical given the Covid situation, and it has only been vindicated further with the onset of the second wave that has affected the country severely. Considering the fact that children have been largely confined to their homes and not been able to play outdoor sports, it is also no coincidence that the last 15 months have seen a rise in interest in chess with plenty of beginners taking up the board game.

"We have around 40 students in the academy right now. We haven't done much marketing, but quite a few beginners have got into it since last year," Vishnu tells this paper.

At around the same time as Vishnu began thinking of setting up his own centre, GM Swapnil Dhopade, who lives in Amravati in Maharashtra, also started his own online coaching academy for chess players. He began with one coach training the students but had to soon increase the number of coaches to four to deal with the increased demand.

A major reason for the spike in interest is because of the fact that chess has made a seamless transition to online coaching. Unlike outdoor sports where there are limitations to online training, chess is not bound by those restrictions. Eminent coach and GM RB Ramesh, who runs Chess Gurukul in Chennai, has been honing the skills of youngsters for many years and feels that he doesn't lose out anything while coaching students online. "There is no difference with online coaching. To some extent, you won't get the same experience as in person, but it doesn't take away too much," Ramesh offers his perspective.

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No.CEE-SLDC/SEESCADA/EE(D)/2021-22/381 Date:20.05.2021

BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION
(e-Procurement mode only)

KPTCL invites bid against this office Enquiry No.KPTCL/CEE-SLDC/SEE-SCADA/EE(D)/BAF-001/2020-21(Call-2),**For Integration of additional bays commissioned in various stations of Bengaluru Trans-mission Zone to SCADA RTU under Total Turnkey basis.** The bids will be received through electronic tendering mode only. The details regarding The details regarding participation can be obtained by logging on to **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in on or after 3.00 PM on 27.05.2021**

Sd/- Chief Engineer (Electy),
State Load Despatch Center, KPTCL, No.28,
Race Course Road, Bengaluru-560 009.
Phone:29700049/22267034

KOLAR – CHI KKABALLAPURA DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCER'S SOCIETIES UNION LIMITED., KOLAR
[P.B No. 63, N.H-4, Huthur Post, Kolar – 563102. Karnataka]
(Ph.No 08152-282 310/350/331,7760964517,
E-Mail- komulpurchase@yahoo.com)

I. IFT No. KCMU/ PUR/ E-PROCUREMENT/ 1472 /2021-22 Date: 24.05.2021

** E-PROCUREMENT SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION **

The Kolar-Chikkaballapur Milk Union Limited, Kolar invites tenders from eligible Tenderers for the supply of the following materials.

S.No	Description of Material	Qty[InNo's]
	Supply of 3 Ply Corrugated Boxes to Pack Following Good Life Varients For Three Months To Kolar Dairy	
1.	100 ml Fino Packs Toned/Smart with Partitions Single Colour Printing	3,50,000
2.	180 ml Fino Packs Toned/Smart with Partitions Single Colour Printing	16,50,000
3.	500 ml Fino Packs Toned/Slim with Partitions Single Colour Printing	5,10,000
4.	500 ml Brik Packs Toned/Slim/Smart without Partitions Single Colour Printing	3,60,000
5.	1000 ml Brik Packs Cow's Milk/Toned/Gold/Slim/Smart without Partitions Single Colour Printing	6,75,000
6.	1000 ml **Customised Coffe Day Milk Brik** Packs without Partitions **3 Colour Printing**	30,000

II. IFT No. KCMU/ PUR/ E-PROCUREMENT/ 1475/2021-22 Date: 24.05.2021

S.No	Description of Material	Qty[InNo's]
	Supply of 3 Ply Corrugated Boxes to pack following Good Life variants for three months to Mega Dairy, Chikkaballapur	
1	500 ml Brik Toned/Slim/Smart Packs without Partitions Single Colour Printing	7,20,000
2	1000 ml Brik Toned/Slim/Gold/Smart Packs without Partitions Single Colour Printing	5,30,000
3	1000 ml **Customised Coffe Day Toned Milk Slim Brik** Packs without Partitions **3 Colour Printing**	75,000
	Supply of 3 Ply Corrugated Boxes to pack following Flexi Milk Pack variants for three months to Mega Dairy, Chikkaballapur	
01	160 ml Flexi Double Toned Milk Packs with Partitions Single Colour Printing	40,000
02	500 ml Flexi Double Toned Milk Packs with Partitions Single Colour Printing	2,50,000

III. IFT No. KCMU/ PUR/ E-PROCUREMENT/ 1474/2021-22 Date: 24.05.2021

S.No	Description of Material	Qty
01	Supply of Flexi Pack Printed 5 Layered multiplastic film to pack different varients of flexi UHT milk to Mega Dairy,CB.Pur on Half Yearly Rate Contract Basis	1,00,000 Kgs

Access to E-tender Documents : 24.05.2021 to 16.06.2021 05.00 PM
Last date for submission : on or before 16.06.2021, 05.00 PM
Date of opening of Tech. Tender : 18.06.2021, 11.00 AM onwards
Tender documents may be downloaded from e-procurement website **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in/**

Sd/- M.D, KOMUL

Bamul **BENGALURU URBAN, BENGALURU RURAL & RAMANAGAR DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS' SOCIETIES UNION LTD.,**
DR. M.H. MARIGOWDA ROAD, BENGALURU-560029. Phone No.080-26096207 / 210

No. BAMUL/ADMN-4/01/INSU/TENDER/2021-22 Date:24.05.2021

TECHNICAL-CUM-COMMERCIAL SHORT TERM e-TENDER

Bengaluru Co-Operative Milk Union Ltd., (BAMUL) Bengaluru, invites e-Tender from the Interested, Eligible, Registered and Qualified insurance companies to provide Medical Insurance for Staff Mediclaim for the period of 2021-22 (One year) on Annual Rate contract basis.

Tender No. BAMUL/ADMN-4/01/INSU/TENDER/2021-22

Sl. No.	PARTICULARS	
	Mediclaim Insurance for BAMUL Employees for the period 2021-22	
	TIME SCHEDULE OF e-TENDER	
1	Access to E-tender Documents	**24.05.2021 to 18.06.2021**
2	Last date & Time for tender clarification	**14.06.2021 at 4.00 PM**
3	Last date for submission of tender / quoting	**18.06.2021 at 5.00 PM**
4	Date & time for opening Technical Tender Part-I	**21.06.2021 at 11.00 AM**
5	Date & time for opening Commercial Tender Part-II	**22.06.2021 at 11.30 AM**
6	Place of opening of Technical Cum Commercial Tender : **BAMUL, Dr.M.H.Marigowda Road, Bengaluru-560029.**	

Regarding Tender related queries and clarifications contact website: **www.eproc.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/- Managing Director
Tender Inviting Authority, Bengaluru Co-Op. Milk Union Ltd.,

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDER (Only Through e-Procurement Portal)

BWSSB invites Tenders from Registered Tenderers for the following works.

Office of the Chief Engineer (Design), 9th Floor, Kaveri Bhavan, KG Road, Bengaluru - 560 009.

Sl No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount put to Tender / EMD Amount (in ₹.)	Last date & time for Submission of Tender	Date & time for Opening of Tender
1.	Central Stores	BWSSB/EE(CStr)/AEE/ ASO/AE/STR/87/2021-22 Date: 12.05.2021	₹ 85,22,902/- / ₹ 1,70,500/-	19.06.2021 before 4:00 pm	21.06.2021 at 12:00 noon
2.		BWSSB/EE(CStr)/AEE/ ASO/AE/STR/85/2021-22 Date: 12.05.2021	₹ 98,89,000/- / ₹ 1,97,780/-	21.06.2021 upto 4:00 pm	23.06.2021 at 12:00 noon
					Sd/- Executive Engineer (Central Stores)
3.	Quality Assurance	BWSSB/EQATE/PB/ 01-2021/89/2021-22 Dated: 12.05.2021	₹ 19,27,000/- / ₹ 48,200/-	02.06.2021 upto 4:00 pm	04.06.2021 at 12:00 noon
					Sd/- Executive Engineer (Quality Assurance)

Office of the Chief Engineer (West), 6th Floor, Kaveri Bhavan, KG Road, Bengaluru - 560 009.

4.	West	BWSSB/EEW/TO/PB/151/ 2021-22 Dated: 04.05.2021	₹ 8,48,037/- / ₹ 21,200/-	31.05.2021 upto 4:00 pm	01.06.2021 after 4:30 pm
5.		BWSSB/EEW/TO/PB/207/ 2021-22 Dated: 17.05.2021	₹ 12,54,681/- / ₹ 31,400/-		
					Sd/- Executive Engineer (West)

The details regarding participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in** For further details contact the undersigned office during working hours.

DIPR:/402/21-22

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19, NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE.

Wear Mask | 6 Feet Follow Physical Distancing | Maintain Hand Hygiene

QuoteExpress WITHOUT HARD WORK, NOTHING GROWS BUT WEEDS › GORDON B HINCKLEY

British PM lied about herd immunity pursuit: Ex-aide

Former chief adviser Dominic Cummings says he has documents to prove Johnson was not serious about Covid and treated it like flu

A file photo of Britain's PM Boris Johnson (L) and his special advisor Dominic Cummings leaving 10 Downing Street en route to Parliament | AFP

COVID

LONDON: Ahead of a much-anticipated hearing into Britain's coronavirus response, former chief adviser Dominic Cummings has accused Prime Minister Boris Johnson of lying about pursuing a strategy of herd immunity when the pandemic first hit.

Cummings is due to give evidence to the House of Commons select committees on health and science on Wednesday, and has already suggested he has a crucial document that will expose the government's handling of the pandemic when it first arrived in Britain early in 2020.

The influential adviser was sacked at the end of last year, and has recently been involved in a war of words with Downing Street, which accused him of leaking internal conversations and documents to the media. Cummings tweeted that the government initially intended to treat the virus like the flu and pursue a strategy of herd immunity by building up natural defences, but Johnson has denied that was ever the official plan.

"No10 decided to lie... V foolish, & appalling ethics, to lie about it," Cummings tweeted late Saturday. Herd immunity by September 2020 "was literally the official plan," he said. "The right line wd have been what PM knows is true: our original plan was wrong & we changed when we realised," he added.

The initial herd immunity strategy was abandoned less than two weeks before the first lockdown in March 2020 and "is a fundamental issue in the whole disaster", he also said.

"If we'd had the right preparations + competent people in charge, we wd probably have avoided lockdown1, *definitely* no need for lockdowns 2&3," he wrote.

Chief scientific adviser Patrick Vallance suggested in March 2021 that herd immunity was one of the goals, but Health Secretary Matt Hancock two days later said it was "not a goal or strategy".

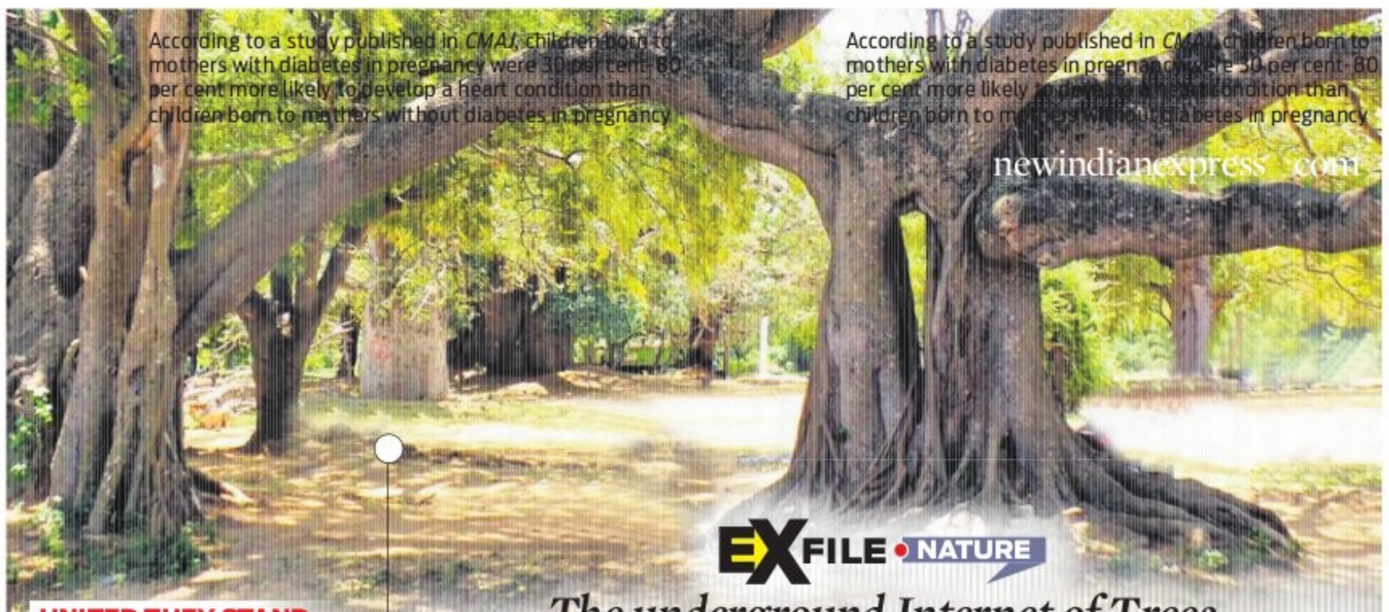
The former adviser warned he will release a "crucial historical document from Covid decision-making" to the Commons committee ahead of his appearance before MPs on Wednesday. Cummings is constrained by the Official Secrets Act, which limits his ability to release classified documents. MPs can only release documents that relate to their "lessons learned inquiry" into the pandemic. Johnson has ordered a full public inquiry into how the pandemic was handled.

Before his sudden departure, Cummings had been Johnson's most influential adviser on Brexit and played an important role in his successful 2019 election campaign. He was also the architect of Britain's campaign to leave the European Union.

Johnson, who has imposed three lockdowns during the pandemic, has hailed Britain's vaccination programme as a success, but the United Kingdom has one of the highest COVID-19 death tolls and it has suffered a deep economic slump. On herd immunity, where the virus spreads through the population to increase overall resistance, Cummings wrote on Twitter: "Our original plan was wrong & we changed when we realised."

Johnson's Downing Street office said in a statement that "herd immunity has never been a policy aim or part of our coronavirus strategy."

"Our response has at all times been focused on saving lives and ensuring the NHS (National Health Service) was not overwhelmed. We continue to be guided by the latest scientific advice," it said.


According to a study published in CMAJ, children born to mothers with diabetes in pregnancy were 30 per cent-80 per cent more likely to develop a heart condition than children born to mothers without diabetes in pregnancy
newindianexpress.com

EXFILE • NATURE

The underground Internet of Trees

Have you watched the James Cameroon epic *Avatar*? Central to the plot of the 2009 flick is a mother tree, connecting all living organisms on planet Pandora through a network called *Tsaheylu*. Did you know that the forests on our planet work on a similar network of real time data sharing? If you didn't, it's high time you read Richard Powers' Pulitzer winning novel *The Overstory*, which is inspired by the research of forest ecologist Dr Suzanne Simard, whose lifework was to unravel the mystery of the social life of trees. Join us to explore

UNITED THEY STAND

Now that we have broached the subject of social life of trees, let's see how they respect each other's personal space and even foster the underprivileged ones

INOSCULATION

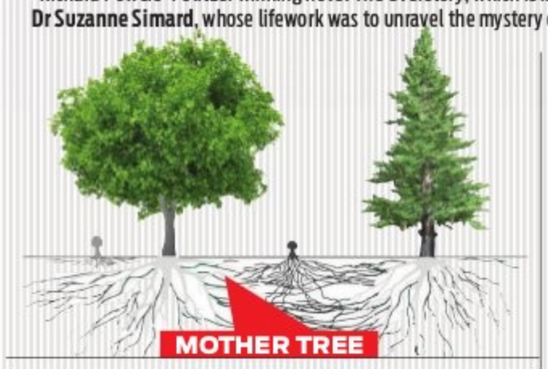
When branches or roots of different trees fuse with each other, the phenomenon is termed as inosculation. There has been a documented case of a thinner tree cut years ago holding on to a bigger one, which feeds it. The above picture shows a tree reaching out to a bigger one, which appears to be cradling it in its arms

GIVING SPACE TO EACH OTHER

If you notice the top foliage of the trees, you will find that despite their being of similar height, none of them is intruding upon each other's space. This is called shameful foliage phenomenon, but we like to believe that the trees are respecting each other's private space

GRAFTING TOGETHER TWO SPECIES

It's a technique farmers use to make plants hardy. The lower part invariably is of a native species, while the grafted part belongs to another fruit or flower-bearing plant. This way, the native species draws the sustenance from ground, while the grafted variety thrives. Whoever said organ transplant was human specific



Simard's research pointed towards the existence of something called a hub tree, or mother tree

Mother trees are the largest trees in forests that act as central hubs for vast below-ground mycorrhizal networks

Mycorrhizal networks are created by mycorrhizal fungi that connect individual plants together

These networks help exchange water, carbon, nitrogen, and other nutrients and minerals

A mother tree supports seedlings by infecting them with fungi and supplying them the nutrients they need to grow

Mother trees change their root structure to make room for baby trees

What this implies is that trees of different species in the same forest are interconnected

Not only do they share nutrients, but through the underground network they share experiences, too

GOT YOUR BACK

Trees communicate and defend themselves against attacking insects. Scientists have found that trees can flood their leaves with chemicals called phenolics when the insects begin their raid. They can also send airborne signals to other trees so they can start their own defence

ENEMY OF THE ENEMY IS...

Research has indicated that a wide range of trees become more resistant to insects after receiving air borne signals. Some have been shown to attract parasites and predators that kill the insects, essentially letting a tormented tree call for backup to respond to the sudden attack

WOOD WIDE WEB's GIVE AND TAKE SYSTEM

The fine, hairlike root tips of trees join together with microscopic fungal filaments to form, what the scientists call, Wood Wide Web. This appears to be a symbiotic relationship between trees and fungi. As a kind of fee, the fungi consume about 30% of the sugar that trees photosynthesise. The sugar is what fuels the fungi, as they scavenge the soil for nitrogen, phosphorus and other nutrients

COMMUNICATION

Trees send chemical and slow-pulsing electrical signals, which is similar to nervous system. Alarm and distress appear to be the main topics of conversation. The University of Western Australia has gathered evidence that some plants emit and detect sounds. This crackling noise in the roots appears at a frequency of 220 hertz, inaudible to humans

SAD OVER DEAD CABBAGE

JC Bose (1858-1937) was one of the first to combine botany with physics. His findings put paid to the utilitarian Darwinism and established that plants also had life. His Crescograph, a device that measures tiny reactions in plant cells, led to a friendship between him and British playwright G B Shaw. After Bose's finding, Shaw reportedly shed tears for a cabbage that was cruelly boiled to death

Iran blames bitcoin mining for blackouts

TECH

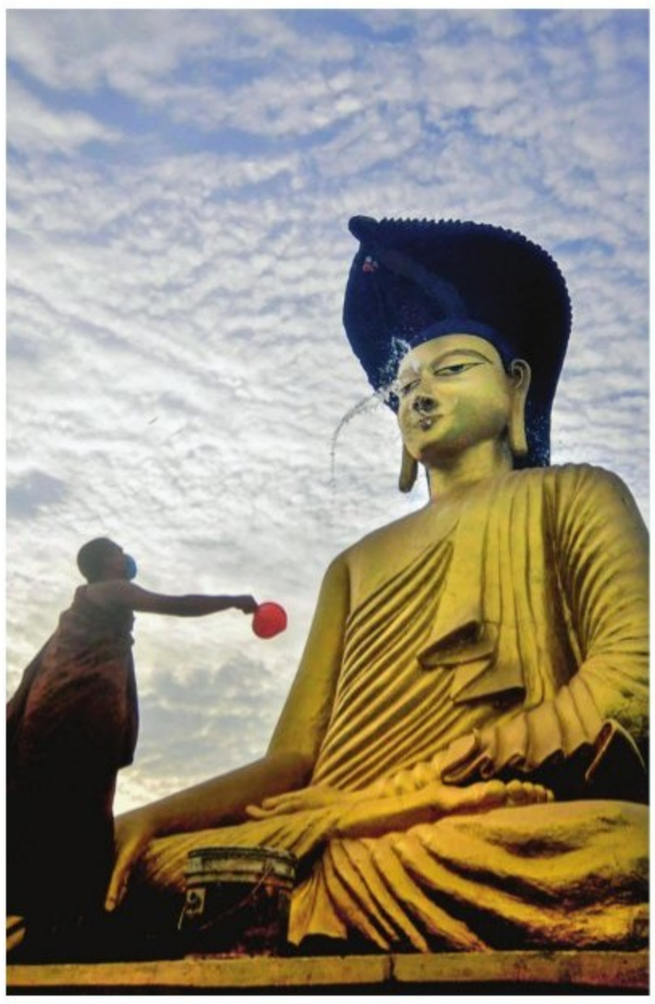
TEHRAN: Iran has started rolling blackouts, local media reported Sunday, which officials blamed on heat, drought impacting hydropower generation, and surging electricity demand blamed in part on crypto-currency mining. Power cuts in the peak summer months are not uncommon in Iran, but a government report this month said precipitation was down 43 percent compared to the country's long-term average, warning of reduced water supplies for the year.

Tehran and several other cities have been hit by unannounced power cuts that sparked complaints from consumers, disrupted businesses and damaged household appliances, Iran's state television reported.

Rolling blackouts for the capital, Alborz and Khorasan Razavi provinces were announced by provincial power distribution companies, with neighbourhoods losing power for at least two hours until evening.

Tehran had experienced brief unplanned outages on Saturday, said AFP correspondents after power cuts had also hit other major cities such as Shiraz and Isfahan from Friday, according to IRNA and ISNA news agencies. The national grid is overburdened from drought as well as "rising temperature and consumption and a new phenomenon called crypto-currencies," ISNA quoted national electricity company director Mohammad Hassan Motevalizadeh as saying.

Iranian officials have regularly blamed "illegal" crypto miners for using vast amounts of electricity through the so-called blockchain process used to generate valuable digital assets like bitcoin. Electricity company spokesman Mostafa Rajabi Mashhadi said Saturday the company cut power to four "overusing" government bodies, while registered crypto mining farms had voluntarily shut down operations to ease the burden.



MONK'S OFFERING

A monk cleaning a statue of Lord Buddha at a monastery, ahead of Buddhist Wesak, which will be observed on May 26, at Agartala in Tripura on Sunday | PTI

Atlantification threatens Arctic ecology, climate

CLIMATE

LONDON: The Arctic Ocean could soon succumb to a new threat – Atlantification. Warm water from the Atlantic Ocean is traveling higher latitudes that is causing the edge of sea ice to melt. Previous research suggested that sea ice partially recovers in the winter following summer melting, but the heated water is overpowering this stabilizing effect and leaving ice more vulnerable.

The findings were revealed by the European Space Agency, which used satellite data to calculate changes in the volume of Arctic sea ice between 2002 and 2019. The data shows that the volume of sea ice in the 2020 to 2021 winter season was at its lowest since these sea-ice data products began in 2010 - and ESA says climate change is to blame. Atlantification can also cause fish native to warm watres move into the Arctic, which would result in many succumbing to the cold climes and lack of natural food sources. Ice acts as an environment that carries organisms. So this could have implications for what seeding populations' there are during the growing season.

FACT OF THE MATTER

Worm adds to ant's life term

RESEARCH

A unique tapeworm that keeps ants young and healthy longer has been found. It also makes them lazier, resulting in uninfected worker ants getting more stressed out and working themselves to death. The parasite, the Anomotaenia brevis tapeworm, can actually extend the life of a Temnothorax nylanderi ant up to a decade or two, approaching the age of an ant queen. But the tapeworm's efforts aren't altruistic: It's hoping to keep its host docile so it won't run away when a woodpecker approaches the colony. When the infected ant is eaten. the tapeworm reproduces inside the bird's gut and is pooped out to be eaten by foraging ants.

Lut desert is the hottest

STUDY

Researchers using high-resolution satellite data from the US Geological Survey say Iran's Lut Desert has the world's hottest land surface, regularly reaching blistering temperatures between 2002 and 2019. The desert is situated between a mountain range, meaning hot air is easily trapped in the sand dunes. While a previous study, published in 2011, suggested that temperatures in the Lut Desert can reach 70.7°C, the new data suggests that this was likely an underestimate. Instead, the researchers say temperatures in the Lut Desert are actually 10 degrees higher than thought.

TELL-TALE STRUCTURE

Ruins of Roman bath for fishermen, gentry found on Spain's Andulasian coast

ARCHAEOLOGY

CADIZ, SPAIN: Ancient Roman baths dating back some 2,000 years have been discovered in the Andalusia region of southwest Spain. The surprisingly well-preserved structure, which still retains windows, doors and entire walls, was discovered under sand dunes in Cádiz's Caños de Meca beach.

The baths were likely intended as a place for local farmers and fishermen to relax and unwind. The complex would have been warmed with hot air heated in a subterranean oven and spread through the walls and floors. For millennia the structure was obscured by dunes that only recently eroded to the point where their bounty could be discovered by archaeologists at the nearby University of Cadiz.

Typically, Roman-era discoveries in Spain are limited to ruins and remnants of foundations, but the baths retained some 14-foot walls and other features. According to the university, the complex spread over 2.5 acres, though only two rooms have been excavated so far. "It is a structure that has an exceptional state of conservation for the Iberian Peninsula and the western Mediterranean in general," said historian Darío Bernal.

Rather than for nobility, baths were likely intended for the working class, specifically fishermen and farmers. During the Roman era, Cadiz was renowned for its fish products, including a fermented fish sauce known throughout the region. The baths would have been a relatively innovative complex, Bernal said, with water heated in giant ovens making its way into various pools.

The baths were just the kind of find archaeologists with University of Cadiz's 'Arqueostra' project were looking for. The team was initially under the impression the structure was part of a fish or crustacean farm. Locals report crossing the dunes for ages and having no idea the baths were there. Experts say the sand is likely responsible for the site's incredible preservation.

Some 12th- and 13th-century ceramics were also found near the baths. More than a half-dozen pools were found in another site in nearby Cape Trafalgar, but those were for salting food, not bathing. The pools ranged in depth from 5 to 6.5 feet, with 'remains of Roman preserves' found in two of them, according to the university. An intact tomb found nearby dates back 4,000 years, and contained the skeletons of several people.

Just off the waters of Cape Trafalgar is the site of one of Europe's most famous naval conflicts: the Battle of Trafalgar, where the British Royal Navy led by Admiral Horatio Nelson routed Napoleon's fleet in 1805.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS City

Bengaluru Express

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
Mail us: bengalurucityexpress@gmail.com

24.05.2021
MONDAY

Priyanka's 1st single to release on May 28

PG 4

DAY'S DIARY

Brooklyn Bridge opens

After 13 years of construction, the Brooklyn Bridge opened on this day in 1883. It's the first suspension bridge to use steel rather than iron cables

THE PIONEER

It is the first bridge across the East River. It remains both an important traffic link and an iconic image of New York City. The bridge was built by John Augustus Roebling

A STRONG DESIGN

Roebling planned for it in the 1850s. He wanted to make use of steel wire. He designed the bridge six times stronger than that is needed

A CELEBRATION

President Chester A Arthur, New York Governor Grover Cleveland and various local politicians marched onto the bridge, accompanied by a military band and an attachment of troops

A STAR IN REAL LIFE

Actor Upendra talks to *CE* about Covid relief, people's generosity, and the satisfaction it brings

A SHARADHAA

SANDALWOOD super star Upendra has become a hero in real-life to people, especially those in the industry, who are struggling to make ends meet due to the blow that Covid restrictions have dealt their livelihood.

When the lockdown was imposed, the actor, director and producer hit the pause button on all his film-related work and plunged into Covid relief efforts through his charity Uppi Foundation.

"Shooting has stopped, theatres are closed... There is absolutely no work in any department... We are making sure the workers, senior actors and support staff get essentials," he says. He says that the government has announced a package, but it is yet to reach the workers, who get paid on a daily basis. In the meantime, he has reached out to workers from the workers' association, such as those who work in music, cinematography, stunts, etc, and even those who work in theatres and film publicity.

"Their primary need is food, which we have been providing with grocery kits sourced from Mandya. But, we have also been receiving inquiries about financial aid, health issues, and we are going by priority," he says.

While Upendra started with helping industry workers, it has expanded to many more different groups of people, and the number of people contributing in cash and kind has also increased, the actor says.

"I always deposited a portion of my earnings into the charity for use for such times. But now, people have donated ₹5,000 and even a couple of lakh rupees.

My friends living abroad have also lent support by pooling in money. That's the greatness of the people in a country who come forward during such times," Upendra says. One of the first to contribute was senior actor Saroja Devi, who donated ₹4 lakh. "There is a long list of people whom I don't have a count of," he says.

Upendra has been releasing updates of relief material coming in and the people it is being given to, on his Twitter account. He has also been acknowledging the people who are helping out.

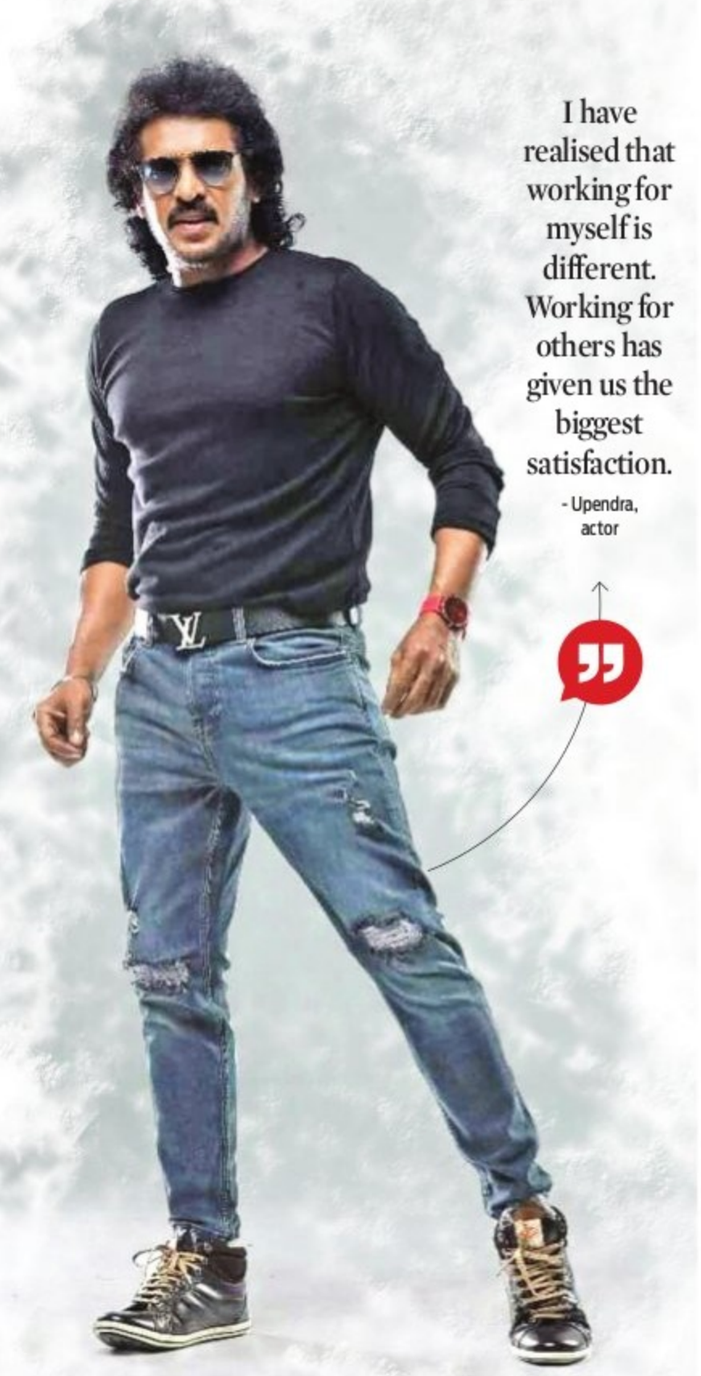
"Transparency is very important. I am listing out names, as this will in a way inspire others," the actor says.

However, this has not stopped critics who accuse him of furthering his political interests. "From day one, I have been saying that there is no connection between Prajakeeya and the social service which I am doing today. I don't have any right to ask for votes in the name of doing social service," he says.

Actor Upendra distributes Covid relief (Top left); a group working with the Real Star with grocery kits (below left); a man offers vegetables towards relief

While most of the people engaged in the relief work are Upendra's own staff, the actor is happy that some relief efforts have given jobs to a few people at least, in terms of packaging, transport and distribution.

"I have also got work now," the actor says, adding, "I have realised that working for myself is different. Working for others has given us the biggest satisfaction. On the positive side, I should say that humanity still exists among people who are helping more than us, and whose names are not known in public."



> I have realised that working for myself is different. Working for others has given us the biggest satisfaction.
>
> - Upendra, actor

Creepy crawlies have a bad rep, but the National Insect Museum in Bengaluru is a great place to learn just how important insects are to our lives and the planet

The butterfly effect

BALA CHAUHAN

MOST people are wary of insects because we associate them with blood sucking and disease-causing mosquitoes, flies that pollute food, or cockroaches that sneak into our homes, much to our horror.

However repulsive they look, insects have been part of our life not just as carriers of disease or as pests of our crops: Over 95 per cent of these creatures are harmless and a large number are useful to us.

Cockroaches, for instance, play an important role in nature as scavengers, while honey bees are among the most important pollinators and are also useful to human beings, butterflies are an important gauge of biodiversity. There are even insects which act as biocontrol agents.

The National Insect Museum in Hebbal, Bengaluru, is a visual encyclopaedia and a one-stop learning centre on insects. Conceptualised by and located at the National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources (NBAIR), the museum has been serving the needs of scientists, students, farmers and everyone who is interested in insects since its inauguration in March 2019.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has recognised the museum as the Designated National Repository for insects, spiders and mites. The specimens in the museum have been collected, curated, preserved and catalogued for over 60 years, representing the history of collection, identification and description, leading to further biological studies. The museum has more than 1.9 lakh dry-mounted specimens, and over two lakh preserved in alcohol. They also include a large number of exotic collections.

PICS: NIM, NBAIR

> It is our duty to provide a safe and secure place for these invaluable collections and we are constantly striving to improve standards
>
> – Dr Ankita Gupta, scientist overseeing the museum

A huge assemblage of insect specimens from the days of the Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control (CIBC) – Indian Station forms part of the collection. It is interesting to note that NBAIR stands on the campus of the erstwhile CIBC, which was established in 1957.

Many of these species are types, meaning they have all the essential characteristics of their respective groups. Specimens of invasive alien species, which threaten our crops and biodiversity, are part of the museum collection. Also, there are a large number of species from fragile and isolated habitats.

"We envision that this museum will cater to the needs of insect taxonomists in the exchange of reference specimens. Creating trained staff for furthering insect systematics is our goal. We are introducing a digitisation and barcoding process to minimise manual handling of rare specimens," said Dr Nandagopal Bakthavatsalam, director, NBAIR, who is known for his work on insect pheromones.

Insect is the loose term that we use to denote all arthropods, including mites and spiders. "We also have collections of nematodes (a type of worm)," said Dr Prakya Sreerama Kumar, principal scientist and an expert on mites.

5.5 million insect species globally | **1 million** insect species are named

1/3 of insects are beetles

of insect species yet to be discovered

Debolina Ray, a city-based blogger, who runs She Knows Grub, dishes out food-related trivia in this weekly series. So, answer these questions and find out how much of a foodie you are.

GRUB HUB

THE QUIZ WILL BE PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

Send answers to **bengalurucityexpress@gmail.com** with the subject line **'Food quiz'**

The correct answers and names of the first three respondents are published here. Prize: The first prize winner this week will win two DIY meal kits (worth ₹1,800) from Little Italy.**

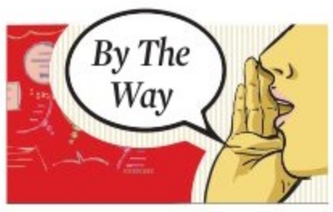
THE RIGHT ANSWERS

1. Dofu; 2. Halasina Hannina Kadubu; 3. KRSMA Estates

FIRST THREE TO GET IT RIGHT

1. T R Prabhakar
2. R Vani
3. Haripriya

**Conditions apply



Birthday wishes

Samyukta Hornad rang in her birthday on Sunday and wishes came pouring in on Instagram. Manvita Kamath put up a story saying, "Happy birthday my dearest samyuuuu" whereas filmmaker Pannaga Bharana wished "Sammyyy" a happy birthday too. Meghana Raj Sarja too joined in.

CITY READ

Hospital sets up free emergency unit

In order to help critically ill Covid-19 patients, Aster RV Hospital Bengaluru, in association with Aster Volunteers, the global CSR arm of Aster DM Healthcare, has set up a modular emergency unit to provide immediate care and attention. The unit has been launched with the support of Shri Bagaria Education Trust and Kemwell Biopharma. This unit comes with five beds that will be provided to patients free of cost at Aster RV Hospital in JP Nagar on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Ageing With HOPE

A programme at Nimhans is reaching out to the elderly, giving them someone who will listen to their problems and also engage them in fun activities

SANATH PRASAD

A programme at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Nimhans) shows that even though people may be in their twilight years, it need not be the end of life. On Saturday, elderly people across the country participated in a fun quiz on the Mahabharata epic, held over Zoom, as part of Sandhya Karanji. The event is part of Vayomanasa Sanjeevani (VMS) programme launched on World Mental Health Day in 2020 by the Geriatric Clinic and Services at Nimhans. It includes a series of virtual sessions and fun activities aimed at boosting the mental well-being of the elderly.

Next week, Nimhans will organise a virtual magic show through Sandhya Karanji, featuring US-based corporate official Anand Sharma, who will put up a clown performance.

"We have roped in volunteers to conduct theme-based sessions twice a month," says Dr **PT Sivakumar**, professor of psychiatry at the geriatric centre, and chief coordinator of VMS. "Most of them are senior citizens, including women aged over 50. They include retired government officials, homemakers, professional counsellors and others who are contributing to VMS."

These volunteers will be divided into eight groups comprising 20-30 members each, to engage the elderly participants in virtual format.

"Volunteers have the liberty to choose the subjects and themes relevant to the initiative. Our aim is to maximise the volunteer base and ensure more members step in to boost the outreach programme at a pan-India level," says Sivakumar.

The sessions - which could be themed on stress management, loneliness, anxiety, sleeplessness, etc - can go on for up to an hour. "During the pandemic, many senior citizens have been confined to homes. We are striving to bring them out from isolation through entertainment and insightful online sessions.

We as senior citizens understand and empathise with fellow senior citizens. It is important to listen to them rather than give advice," says DC Ranganath Rao, a former industrialist and counsellor.

WHAT WHEN WHY WHERE

MUSICAL TRIBUTE

Bengaluru Classical Arts Circle is paying a musical tribute to renowned classical music organiser late D Pranesh Babu. The online event will feature artistes like Pt. Muddu Mohan, Pt. Iman Das and Radhika Venkatramana who will be performing Hindustani and Carnatic jugalbandi and more. **When:** May 29, **Details:** bookmyshow.com

VIRTUAL GIG

Enjoy a virtual musical concert featuring playback singer Usha Uthup. The event will feature a special list of songs curated based on 'The Original Take on Nightclub Era'. Also get a chance to visit the virtual backstage and interact with artistes. **Details:** insider.com

THEATRE WORKSHOP

Acting coach Dimple Kalshan is organising online theatre games for teen and pre-teens. The workshop aims to train participants in team-work, team-building, leadership, creative skills and much more. **When:** May 27, **Details:** bookmyshow.com

MUSICAL TOUR

Indian Musical Experience is organising a virtual musical world tour for kids. The summer camp aims to introduce children to the world of global music and stories and learn songs in five different languages. **When:** May 24, 10:30 am **Details:** bookmyshow.com

ENJOY A PERFORMANCE BY STANDUP COMEDIAN GAURAV GUPTA AS HE SPEAKS ON TOPICS THAT YOU CAN CONNECT WITH. TICKETS: BOOKMYSHOW.COM

Skilling Up

Enlighted Sapiens, a social enterprise is conducting a virtual interactive session on how to discover the inner-self, dominant intuitive style and staying connected. It also focuses on training the participants in enhanced decision making process **When:** May 30, **Details:** insider.in

Classical Event

Watch Bharathantyam dancer Suma Anurag perform to the tunes of devotional music. Ganapatri stuti, raaga naata, adithala, thillana, ashtapadi, annamacharya kriti are some of the tracks she will be performing. **When:** May 29, **Tickets:** bookmyshow.com

Online Fun

VYOMA Artspace and Studio Theatre are organising Gurukula live which aim to give children the joy of reading comic books and listening to stories. It also includes quizzes, games, puppetry and other interesting activities. **When:** May 24 onwards, 12pm, **Details:** 7892920189

Triathlon Sessions

Triathlon coaching team - Life of Tri is conducting a month-long virtual sports session for athletes. The sessions will focus on cycling and indoor fitness routines followed by interactive sessions with experts from various fields like swimming, running, cycling, nutrition and more. **When:** Ongoing. **Details:** Life of Triathletes website

Improv Storytelling

Enjoy online improv storytelling sessions every Wednesday. The event is hosted by Kaivalya Plays which focuses on giving a platform to artistes and other individuals to present stories, characters and scenes spontaneously. **Details:** insider.in

QUICK FIX

What's cooking

IN YOUR KITCHEN?
We are hungry for recipes with minimum ingredients and maximum flavours. Share your quick-fix with us, along with step-by-step photos, at cityexpresschn@gmail.com.

APPLE BUTTER

INGREDIENTS

- **Apples:** 6, medium-sized
- **Sugar:** 1/4 cup
- **Water:** 1/2 cup
- **Salt:** 1 pinch
- Juice of 1/2 lime
- **Cinnamon:** 1 stick

METHOD

- Wash, core and chop the apples into cubes.
- Heat water in a thick-bottomed pan on low flame. Add apples, sugar, salt and cinnamon. Cover and simmer.
- Stir now and then and cook till the apples absorb all the sugar syrup and become mushy.
- Switch off the flame and allow to cool.
- Remove the cinnamon stick and process the cooked apples into a smooth paste in a blender.
- Cook the paste in the pan for two-three minutes till smooth and thick.
- Mix in lemon juice and store in a glass bottle. Can be had with bread, bun or chapati.

— Chitra Ramachandran, Bengaluru

FIT BIT

PARSVA BAKASANA

(SIDE CRANE POSE)

In Sanskrit, 'parsva' means side or flank, 'baka' means crane, and 'asana' means pose. It is an advanced variation of the arm balance Bakasana, which requires both core and arm strength.You also have to be mentally strong. Make sure to warm up thoroughly before attempting it. Practise several rounds of Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskara) and 10-20 minutes of active, standing postures before moving into Side Crow. Traditionally, it is said to activate the Manipura (navel) chakra, which boosts self-confidence, power, and control.

STEPS

- Come into a half squat. Put your heels flat on the ground. Exhale, bend your torso right.
- Keep your lower part of left ribs across your right thigh. Your left armpit close to the right thigh.
- With maximum twist, place your left arm on the right hip.
- Maintain this pressure; draw upper arm to your right knee.
- Keep your left hand close to your right foot and lean towards right side until you place your palm on the ground.
- Keep your hands shoulder width apart. Raise your pelvis and gently shift it to the right side. Rest your abdomen in between your hands.
- Slowly, lift your feet by shifting the weight onto your hands. Keep your feet together, placing your heels inwards.
- Hold on for about 30 to 60 seconds or as per your capacity.
- Exhale and slowly get back to your previous position and try the pose on your left side.
- Do at least 5 sets.

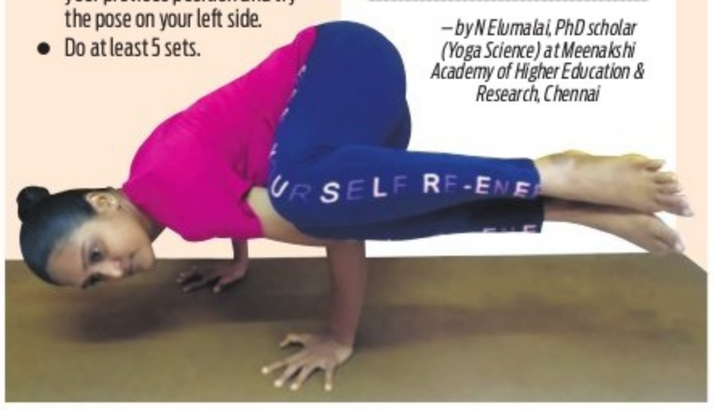
BENEFITS

- Strengthens and tones your arms and shoulders.
- Engages and improves core muscles.
- Improves your balance and focus. Helps improve confidence.
- Increases the hand strength and wrist articulation.
- Tones your belly and spine.
- Increases your sense of body balance.
- Good for reducing physical strain and mental stress.
- Best for core tightening and strengthening the muscles of your abdominal area.

LIMITATIONS

- Pregnant women should avoid this. Those who have any wrist, shoulder or lower back injury, or carpal tunnel syndrome don't practise it.
- Make sure to practise as per your ability.

— by N Elumalai, PhD scholar (Yoga Science) at Meenakshi Academy of Higher Education & Research, Chennai



SOUNDBOARD

DARKNESS RADIO
Dave and Tim take listeners on an entertaining journey into all aspects of the supernatural, from ghosts and aliens, to monsters, mysteries, myths and legends with guest experts, experiencers and eye witnesses.
- On Apple Podcasts

THE WILD WITH CHRIS MORGAN
Taking listeners across the Pacific Northwest and around the world, host Chris Morgan explores wildlife and the complex web of ecosystems they inhabit. He also tells the stories of people working in and protecting the wild around us.
- On Stitcher

NATURE PODCAST
The Nature Podcast brings you the best stories from the world of science each week. We cover everything from astronomy to zoology, highlighting the most exciting research from each issue of Nature journal.
- On Apple Podcast

VAYADI
Vayadi is a podcast from Chennai Art Theatre. It features a range of lesser-known and spoken about topics; along with radio plays, artist profiles, technical know-how in theatre and much more.
- On Spotify

THE PERSONAL FINANCE PODCAST
Andrew Giancola from Dollar After Dollar reveals all of his personal finance, money, investing, business strategies, income sources, stock, and real estate investing tips so that you can build more wealth than you ever thought possible.
- On Spotify

POPULAR ON YOUTUBE

RX SOORI
A young gangster becomes infamous for his criminal activities in Andhra Pradesh. But things change when he falls in love with his childhood friend.
- Cast: Duniya Vijay, Ravi Shankar, Adi Lokesh

MALLA
Shiva, a florist's son, grows up to become a gangster. After his father is murdered, he sets out to take revenge against the culprits.
- Cast: V Ravichandran, Priyanka Upendra, Umashree

KEMPEGOWDA
Kempe Gowda, an honest police officer and a people's man, takes on a gangster, Armugam. However, the mafia leader has close connections with the bureaucrats, which keeps him safe against the law.
- Cast: Kichcha Sudeep, Ravishankar, Ragini Dwivedi

ANTARAVIRALLI
Sanjay and Nitya fall in love with each other despite facing opposition from their peers. They soon become intimate and Nitya gets pregnant, which causes problems in their lives.
- Cast: Prakhyuth Parameesh, Achyuth Kumar, Chikkanna

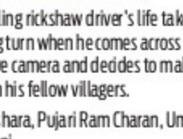
Scan this QR code to find out how your favourite celebs are coping with the lockdown.

WHAT'S ON TED TALKS

1 WOMEN AND GIRLS, YOU ARE PART OF THE CLIMATE SOLUTION BY RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI
Entrepreneur, scientist and TED Fellow Rumaitha Al Busaidi looks at why women are more likely to be impacted and displaced by climate catastrophes — and explains why access to education, employment and family planning for all women and girls is the key to our climate future.

2 WHY YOU DON'T NEED EIGHT GLASSES OF WATER A DAY BY JEN GUNTER
You know the old rule that you need to drink eight glasses of water every day? It's simply a myth, says Dr. Jen Gunter. In this episode, she explains the amazing way your kidneys keep your system in balance — and how you can really tell if you're dehydrated. Check out her podcast Body Stuff, from the TED Audio Collective.

3 HOW NASA INVENTED A VENTILATOR FOR COVID-19 IN 37 DAYS BY DAN GOODS
Get the behind-the-scenes story from visual strategist Dan Goods about how a single question launched NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab into action at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, propelling an unprecedented pivot from space — exploring robots to life-saving ventilators.



4 HOW COVID-19 TRANSFORMED THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE BY DANIEL KRAFT
Physician-scientist Daniel Kraft explains how breakthroughs and advancements like AI-infused antiviral discoveries and laboratory-level diagnostic tools accessible via smartphones are paving the way for a more democratised, connected and data-driven future of medicine and personalised care.

5 WHAT'S YOUR HAPPINESS SCORE BY DOMINIC PRICE
How do you rediscover a happier, more purpose-driven (and less productivity-obsessed) self in the wake of the pandemic? Quiz yourself alongside work futurist Dominic Price as he lays out a simple yet insightful four-part guide to assessing your life in ways that can help you reconnect with what's really important.

NOW STREAMING

REGIONAL

ARISHADVARGA (Kannada)
An aspiring actor doubling as an amateur gigolo gets caught up in a sticky situation after accepting a surprise gift from an anonymous client. Cast: Sumyuktha Hornad, Anju Alva Naik
- Watch on: Amazon Prime Video

INSPECTOR VIKRAM (Kannada)
Vikram, a police officer, strives hard to solve every case that comes his way. However, things take a turn when he encounters a criminal mastermind who runs an illegal drug operation.
Cast: Prajwal Devaraj, Bhavana
- Watch on Sunnxt

HERO (Kannada)
A barber stumbles upon his ex-lover in the home of a notoriously bloodthirsty gang leader. Misadventures ensue when he tries to help her escape with the gangster's men in hot pursuit. Cast: Rishab Shetty, Pramod Shetty
- Watch on: Zee 5

MELLE (Malayalam)
After a tragic experience, a young woman journeys to her father's homeland and falls in love with a kind-hearted doctor.
Cast: Amit Chakkalackal, Thanuja Karthik, Joju George, P Balachandran
- Watch on: Netflix

KAPPELA (Malayalam)
A young woman falls in love with a man after dialling his number by mistake. However, when she visits his city to meet him, a stranger named Roy enters her life.
Cast: Anna Ben Nayarambalam, Roshan Mathew, Tanvi Ram, Sreenath Bhasi
- Watch on: Netflix

All the streaming apps can be accessed on smartphones and smart TVs with Internet connection.

CINEMA BANDI (Telugu)
A struggling rickshaw driver's life takes a rollicking turn when he comes across an expensive camera and decides to make a film with his fellow villagers.
Cast: Trishara, Pujari Ram Charan, Uma YG, Davani
- Watch on: Netflix

SARDAR KA GRANDSON (Hindi)
A devoted grandson embarks on a complicated and comic journey to fulfill his ailing grandmother's last wish.
Cast: Arun Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh, Neena Gupta, John Abraham
- Watch on: Netflix

FOREIGN

THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW (English)
Agoraphobic Dr Anna Fox witnesses something she shouldn't while keeping tabs on the Russell family, the seemingly picture perfect clan that lives across the way.
Cast: Amy Adams, Julianne Moore, Gary Oldman, Wyatt Russell
- Watch on: Netflix

FAUDA (Israeli, series)
After retiring from the Israel Defense Force, Doron is working on a vineyard. Upon learning that an enemy who Doron thought his unit had killed is still alive, Doron rejoins the IDF team.
Cast: Lior Raz, Rona-Lee Shimon, Laetitia Eido, Itzik Cohen
- Watch on: Netflix

THE INTERPRETER (English)
A United Nations interpreter's life is turned upside down and she is targeted by killers, when she overhears a plot to assassinate an African head of state.
Cast: Nicole Kidman, Sean Penn, Catherine Keener, Jesper Christensen
- Watch on: Netflix

LITTLE (English)

Jordan Sanders, a successful businesswoman who treats her employees poorly, wakes up one morning to discover that she has been transformed into her 13-year-old self, who was constantly bullied.
Cast: Marsai Martin, Regina Hall, Issa Rae, Justin Hartley
- Watch on: Netflix

SUBSCRIPTION

Prime Video: ₹ 129 per month
Disney+Hotstar: ₹ 399 per year
Netflix: ₹ 199 per month

IN TUNE WITH TRAGEDY

City-based musician Hanumankind's new composition, called *Second Wave*, is a wake-up call to urge people to take stock of the reality of the situation

Sooraj Cherukat aka Hanumankind

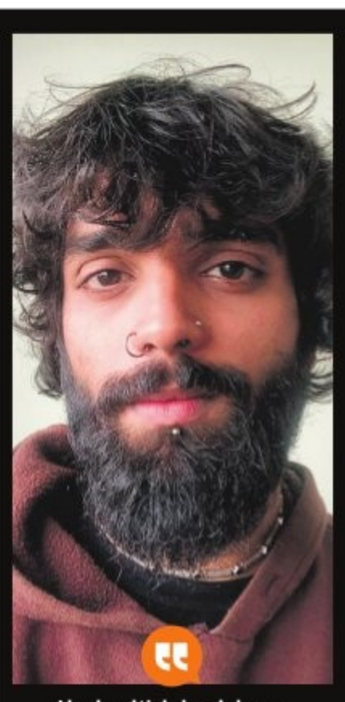
SIMRAN AHUJA

The video starts with a trigger warning. Rightly so, because the disturbing visuals and the poignant rap that follow in the composition *Second Wave*, are a powerful mirror that rapper Hanumankind holds up to the situation many of us are going through due to Covid-19.

The 2 minute- 16 second video – viewed over three lakh times – shows mass funerals, patients desperately waiting for beds, and grieving and traumatised caregivers. It also features election rallies and religious gatherings that took place just before the onset of the deadly second wave.

Sooraj Cherukat a.k.a Hanumankind uploaded the composition on his Instagram page on May 1, and it's a testimony to how serious things are, that the situation has remained largely unchanged in the three weeks since. "This was my way of expressing how I feel. I've heard of the struggles from those in my close circle. So I can't imagine what the general public must be feeling," says the Bengaluru-based musician.

Hanumankind insists the new work, featuring beats by Chennai-based producer and mix engineer Akash Shravan, is a composition and not a track or song. "I didn't put it out for any commercial purpose," he says, pointing out that that's the reason he's released *Second Wave* on his Instagram (@hanumankind) and not even on his YouTube channel.



I had multiple breakdowns because it was painful to go through all the visuals at once. I wanted the end result (the video) to have an impact – Bijoy Shetty

The idea came to Hanumankind while he was in Kerala. A short visit to be with family turned into a much longer trip due to the lockdown. "I consider myself lucky to be able to be with my family right now. I know that if I were in Bengaluru or any other major city right now, it would be much harder to deal," he says. The composition was then born as a result of the helplessness he felt. "I hope it acts like a trigger and gets people to act - either through donations to organisations or by sharing relevant information," he adds.

The composition - which took all of two days to make - packs a powerful punch with its effective use of visuals. Compiled by visual artiste Bijoy Shetty, the footage took him longer than usual to put together, and stayed with him long after the work was made. "We had seen some of these visuals on social media but not in this way where it's all put together," says 23-year-old Shetty, who took more than double the time he would normally take to do this. "I had multiple breakdowns because it was painful to go through all of this at once. I wanted the end result to have an impact. It's no longer about pointing fingers about how we landed here. We now need to face the reality of the situation," he says.

CITY READ

Sonu Sood addresses graduating class of city school

Canadian International School Bangalore, celebrated its graduating class of 2021. The guest speakers included actor Sonu Sood. The graduates have been accepted to over 270 colleges and universities around the world. They have also been awarded over nearly three million US dollars in merit.

Cafe distributes meals to those in need

Due to the current lockdown, several daily wage workers and migrant workers have lost their livelihood and can't afford even one meal a day. Recognising this, Cafe Reset Bengaluru is cooking meals and serving it to everyone in need. They are also serving frontline workers. So far, they have served 10,000 meals and plan to continue their efforts.

ARE YOU GAME?
Anusha Ganapathi

(This economics graduate spends her leisure time preparing for the zombie apocalypse)

THE ELUSIVE POT OF GOLD

Wrath of the Druids' is the first expansion story to Assassin's Creed Valhalla, and you will not be surprised to hear that I played it. I had to play it. When the game first came out, I spent a lot of time finishing side missions to acquire two very powerful weapons: Mjolnir (Thor's hammer) and Excalibur (a powerful greatsword that proved that I am a worthy gamer). Unfortunately, however, the weapons were obtained only AFTER the main story was complete. I had to rationalise the effort I spent in acquiring these shiny pieces of metallic perfection. I am forced to say that biding my time for the first expansion to release has been worth it. The TL;DR version of my review is as follows: It's ore of the same, however, I love Assassin's Creed and its grind. I would manually grind coffee beans for two hours if it meant a leap of faith was waiting for me.

The expansion is set in a new territory — Ireland. This officially brings the number of explorable regions in Valhalla to 6. This includes Norway, North America, England, Asgard and Jotunheim. As I spent even more time animal-back riding, climbing, river boating, and running in Ireland, I wondered if I had endured the pointless travelling for long enough, to finally start enjoying it. Ireland is visibly different from the territories in the other explored regions. I don't know if I was imagining it, but it looked a lot greener, and it rained more frequently.

The commonly encountered villains in Ireland are Druids. On an annoyance scale of dogs barking in the night to mosquito buzzing in the ears, they would be closest to the mosquito. Why? First, they randomly manifest in enemy locations. Second, poison causes damage and hallucination. Third, there are random puffs of smoke mid-combat. Fourth, I wish I could stealth to avoid all of this, but complete stealth is impossible in Valhalla.

The Ireland storyline brings back the much-missed feature of old AC games — pigeon coop. We all know that pigeon coop is but a metaphor for 'side-mission generator'. But it was comforting to see them spread across the isle. Another addition to the expansion was trade posts — business expansion is now a channel of securing power and currying favour with the rulers. The secondary story involves defeating the Children of Danu, aka, the Irish Order of the Ancients.

Ok so I did all of this, and I am left with a feeling of emptiness. Maybe the real Pot of Gold was all the traveling we did along the way.

Mask miracles: How to get flawless skin

PAIRED WITH PANACHE
Anuja Pandey

Masks - and no we don't mean the cloth or N95 variants - have been in existence for a long time. Think Cleopatra, who was on the top of her skin care game even back then. Clay and charcoal masks have always been around. Sheet masks and sleep masks, however, are a new introduction and are a rage in the recent K-beauty era. Even camel milk is a legit skin care ingredient that has been used for centuries and is now making an appearance in many new-age masks. Besides being great for self-care, using a mask is also a good way of giving your skin some extra TLC.

Skin type, age and season are important factors to consider when choosing a face mask. They fall into seven different categories:

- Sheet masks
- Clay (or mud) masks
- Cream masks
- Peel-off masks
- Gel masks
- Charcoal masks
- Sleep masks

Clay masks: Clay, mud or clarifying masks are great for acne-prone skin. Kaolin or Amazonian white clay or Australian pink clay have many medicinal uses. With a proven ability to absorb toxins, it clears up the skin.

Cream masks: Soothing ingredients like oatmeal can calm sensitive or even sunburned skin. It is good for mature skin as it doesn't dry.

Gel masks: This works wonderfully in summer or rainy seasons. These masks have a cooling, soothing sensation, and they're generally best for dry, dehydrated or sensitive skin.

Peel-off masks: These are like a mini facial. They are pore refiners and are great for acne or comedones.

Sheet masks: These are hydrating, nourishing and leave an overdose of serum on your skin, giving it a refreshed and healthy glow. They deliver nutrients to your face. Aside from sheet masks for your full face, there are sheet masks for your eyes, nose, lips, décollete and feet. Dipthi Ashok, a makeup artist, says, "One of the ways to ensure flawless makeup application is to use a sheet mask for 15 minutes before applying makeup. Your base products will go on so much more smoothly if the canvas is hydrated and plump, and will last longer too."

Charcoal masks: This category has an overlap of cream, sheet and clay mask, so it could be in any form. The ingredient is activated charcoal for detoxifying the skin. Shantanu Deshpande, founder and CEO at Bombay Shaving Company says, "The charcoal peel-off mask can be used once or twice a week, but ideally not more. Activated charcoal and tea tree oil help deep cleanse and de-tan oily, damaged skin, unclog pores and remove excess oil to fight acne and prevent future outbreaks. Activated bamboo charcoal can work wonders for your complexion."

Sleep mask: If there's no time to mask during the day, reach out for an overnight mask in lieu of the night cream to wake up to super smooth hydrated skin. Use the sleep mask and ditch your night cream every once a week as it helps in thwarting wrinkles, dryness and spots.

(The author is a social media influencer and lifestyle coach)

Masks are good for self-care and giving your skin some TLC
PIC: NEVIN PHILIP

PLAY ON
Arjun Sukumaran

(Arjun is a gamer, book lover and an all-round renaissance man)

Make this your mission

Shadow Tactics puts you in charge of a group of unlikely heroes trying to unmask and thwart a mysterious warlord

Scrolling through Steam's list of on-sale games is dangerous — there's always at least one really good game at a ludicrously low enough price to make you snap it up. This week, that game is Shadow Tactics: Blades of the Shogun, which is a game I already own and love — it made my top 10 games of 2016 — but is still somehow criminally overlooked.

Set in Japan's Edo period, Shadow Tactics puts you in charge of a ragtag group of unlikely heroes trying to unmask and thwart a mysterious warlord who's threatening to drag the country into civil war. You'll start off playing as the ninja Hayato, but you'll soon be joined by various other characters — each with their own skill sets, personality and play styles — through a variety of missions.

First, though, let's talk about the games that inspired Shadow Tactics, and one series in particular. For many people, myself included, the Commandos games represent the pinnacle of real-time stealth strategy. Good news for those people, and everybody else — Shadow Tactics wears its Commandos-inspired heart proudly on its sleeve. Veterans of the earlier series will feel right at home here, although there's not too much of a learning curve for newcomers either, thanks to the excellent UI design here.

Most missions in Shadow Tactics will see you trying to infiltrate a heavily-guarded compound or sneak up to ambush a heavily-guarded convoy or maybe ghost your way through a heavily-guarded temple — you get the idea. At the beginning of every level, you'll pan the camera over the hordes of armed guards and other obstacles in your path, and you could be forgiven for feeling a certain amount of trepidation. However, by the end, you'll have sliced and weaved your way through those enemies in an extremely satisfying manner. Every mission throws new wrinkles into the mix — maybe this level has secret tunnels that you can use to get from one end of the map to the other, but only if you figure out how to find them in the first place. Or maybe there's a wagon doing the rounds that you could take a ride in on. Or maybe there are some truculent cows that you could provoke into knocking out a hapless guard or two. These environmental tricks and hazards are like a series of Easter eggs just waiting for you to figure out the best way to use them against the foe.

Scanning the level for these little oddities is no hardship, either, because Shadow Tactics is nothing short of beautiful. It might be five years old, but you'd be hard-pressed to tell that from how good it looks. The amount of detail, the way the water and the trees are constantly moving, the way the grass ripples as you move through it — it's spellbinding.

Another way in which Shadow Tactics improves upon its predecessors (in this genre) is through its excellent user interface. Objects you can interact with can be easily highlighted with the press of a button, so you don't have to waste time wondering what you can and can't do. And, best of all, there's actually an on-screen timer that counts back to when you last quicksaved, so that you don't run the risk of losing too much progress thanks to one mistake. How perfect is that?

Shadow Tactics isn't without some faults, but honestly, they don't even come close to being a serious problem. If you like stealth games of any variety, this is a must-play.

WHAT'S NEW?

Mass Effect Legendary Edition

It's undeniable that Mass Effect is one of the greatest science-fiction videogame series of all time; and the Legendary Edition aims to bring the entire trilogy up to modern graphical standards by remastering them and tweaking some of the mechanics in the older games. This looks like the perfect excuse to step into Commander Shepherd's shoes once again.

Subnautica: Below Zero

I adored Subnautica when I played it last year, and I kicked myself for having waited as long as I did to get around to it. I won't be making that mistake with Below Zero, a long-awaited sequel that will be out by the time you read this and will surely be making an appearance in this column before too long.

Resident Evil: Village

The latest entry in the long-shambling Resident Evil franchise is Village, a narrative sequel to 2017's Biohazard. Returning protagonist Ethan Winters soon finds himself thrust back into a world of abominable monstrosities and Gothic horror that he thought he'd left behind him.

'HOPING THIS SINGLE COMES HANDY AS A PITCH TO PRODUCERS'

Priyanka Thimmesh tells CE about her first music album, *Kanseleva Mayavi*, which will be out on May 28, her wildcard entry into the *Bigg Boss* house, and future projects

Priyanka Thimmesh

A SHARADHAA

PRIYANKA Thimmesh, who has been basking in the fame of *Bigg Boss Season 8*, is now looking forward to the release of her first Kannada album song. Titled *Kanseleva Mayavi*, the teaser will be released today, while the song will be unveiled on May 28. This romantic album stars Priyanka and Darshith, and has music by Sam C S. While the lyrics have been written by Suprith Sharma S, it has been sung by Arfaz Ullal, choreographed by Dileep K Gowda and has Ravindranath T handling the camerawork. The actor, who is making her debut in a single, says, "The team I worked with for the music album is planning to come up with a film. And we thought this was the first step to explore our skills and build a rapport. This song will come in handy as a pitch for producers. This was done during the first lockdown when I got all of my friends together for this and invested in this music album."

A still from *Kanseleva Mayavi*

> *The team I worked with for the music album is planning to come up with a film. And we thought this was the first step to explore our skills and build a rapport*
>
> **Priyanka Thimmesh, actor**

Priyanka has been waiting for the release of *Arjun Gowda*, a commercial entertainer produced by late Ramu and directed by Lucky Shankar. It has her paired opposite Prajwal Devaraj. The actor has also completed the shooting of *Sugarless*, a directorial debut of Shashidhar KM. This film has Prithvi Ambar in the lead. Ask about her next, and Priyanka reveals that in all likelihood, she might team up again with the production house of *Sugarless*. "We are still in initial discussions, nothing has been finalised yet. Meanwhile, there are a couple of directors whom I am also in talks with," she says.

Getting out of the *Bigg Boss* house or staying home owing to the pandemic-induced lockdown is one and the same, feels Priyanka. She was one of the actors who got into the reality shows through a wildcard entry and stayed in the house for a month. After her short stint in the *Bigg Boss* house, Priyanka says that people feel she is a girl of few words, but straightforward at the same time. "Viewers felt that I was positive, and didn't take sides with any contestant. People knew me for my films like *Ganapa* and *Pataki*, but now know me better," she says.

Pritika Deshpande's look from *Pentagon* anthology revealed

CE FEATURES

Pritika Deshpande is making her debut as an actor in the upcoming anthology of *Pentagon*. This feature film, consisting of five stories, will have her starring in the episode directed by debutant Kiran Kumar. Though Prithika has been working along with her husband Guru Despande's production house, G Cinemas, she will finally get to face the camera with this film, thus fulfilling her 15-year-old dream. According to the actor, it was the story and role that inspired her to take the plunge. The makers released the first-look poster on the occasion of the actor's birthday. The story is set in the mid-1980s and has been shot in and around Sakleshpur. This particular episode also has actors Ravi Shankar, Vamshi Krishna, and Anusha Rai as part of the cast, and features Abhilash's cinematography while the music is handled by Manikant Kadri and Venki. The other stories are directed by Raghu Shivamogga, Akash Srivatsa, Chandramohan, and Guru Deshpande. The makers, who are left with the shooting of one story from the anthology, plan to release the film in September-October, depending on the pandemic.

Pritika Deshpande

Imtiaz Ali and Ranbir Kapoor to reunite for third film together?

Director Imtiaz Ali and actor Ranbir Kapoor might re-team for their third film together, a report suggests

CE FEATURES

Ranbir had headlined two popular films by Imtiaz - *Rockstar* (2011) and *Tamasha* (2015).

According to a report in Bollywood Hungama, Imtiaz is presently working on two projects simultaneously. One of them is a biopic on slain Punjabi folk singer Amar Singh Chamkila. The other is a social film that tackles with suicide. A source told the portal that Imtiaz has taken both films to Ranbir. What's more, the actor has liked one of them and has given his verbal agreement.

Imtiaz's last two films, *Jab Harry Met Sejal* and *Love Aaj Kal 2*, were critical and box-office duds. He also created and wrote the Netflix crime drama series She.

Ranbir Kapoor's upcoming projects are *Brahmastra, Shamshera, Animal* and Luv Ranjan's next.

Ranbir Kapoor

HOCUS POCUS' SEQUEL IN THE WORKS AT DISNEY PLUS, ORIGINAL CAST TO RETURN

CE FEATURES

Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker, and Kathy Najimy are set to come back as Sanderson Sisters — three witches named Winifred, Sarah, and Mary— in the upcoming sequel of the 1993's Disney classic, *Hocus Pocus*.

Disney Studios had been planning to start the work on the sequel of the popular live-action film since 2019, and has finally got the original stars on board for part two, scheduled to be released on its streaming platform Disney Plus in 2022.

According to reports, *The Proposal* filmmaker Anne Fletcher will be directing the movie. Adam Shankman, who was previously attached to helm the sequel, will now serve as an executive producer on the project.

"As heartbroken as I am that I won't be able to direct my friends Bette, Sarah Jessica and Kathy in what is sure to be nothing short of a major event for Disney Plus due to scheduling conflicts, I couldn't be more pleased to be handing over the reins to Anne, who has brought so much laughter and joy into people's lives with her previous work,' Shankman said, I a statement.

Hocus Pocus, directed by Kenny Ortega, was based on the Sanderson Sisters who were resurrected in Salem, Massachusetts, and are bent on becoming immortal.

Dwayne Johnson to star as *Krypto The Superdog* in animated DC League of Super-Pets

CE FEATURES

Dwayne Johnson is set to voice DC canine *Krypto the Superdog* in Warner Bros' upcoming animated film DC League of Super-Pets. The film will also be jointly produced by Dwayne Johnson's Seven Bucks productions.

The superhero action-adventure from writer-director Jared Stern, has been slated to hit the theatres on May 20, 2022. The film's release was already announced, but Johnson's involvement with the project is newest development.

DC League of Super-Pets will clash with Paramount's Mission: *Impossible 7,* Lionsgate's *John Wick: Chapter 4* and an untitled Disney live-action film at the box office.

DC League of Super-Pets, from Warner Bros. and Warner Animation Group, is co-directed by Sam Levine and is the first feature to star Superman's pet. A larger voice-over cast is expected to be announced by the makers soon.

Patricia Hicks, Jared Stern and, under their Seven Bucks Productions banner, Johnson, Dany Garcia and Hiram Garcia are producing the film. John Requa, Glenn Ficarra and Nicholas Stoller are executive producing. The film marks Johnson's second association with DC, as he is shooting for *Black Adam*, in which he plays the title character.